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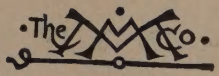
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FREEDOM IN THE CHURCH

OR

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

AS THE LORD HATH COMMANDED, AND AS THIS CHURCH HATH RECEIVED THE SAME ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD

BY

ALEXANDER V. G. ALLEN

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PREFACE

The situation in the American Episcopal Church calls for serious consideration in the interests of theology and of true religion. There are many issues at stake. Honesty in the recitation of the Creed is by no means the only question. Deeper motives lie beneath the present disturbance than can be measured by the uncritical observer. No amount of practice in ethical theorizing qualifies for judgment on the complicated issues of religion. For religion constitutes a department of life by itself, independent of science, or ethics, or philosophy. There is danger that the cause of religious freedom and of freedom of inquiry in theology may be retarded indefinitely unless the emphasis be again placed upon freedom, the one predominant motive of the Reformation in the sixteenth century which gave us the Book of Common Prayer. The desire for freedom, the determination to guard the liberty of both

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clergy and laity then manifested was only another form of the demand of Magna Charta, "Libera sit ecclesia Anglicana." Other words which expressed the purpose of the Reformers and were often quoted were those of St. Paul, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free;" and the words which follow, "And be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage." Other kindred words come from our Lord Himself, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free, and if the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." This freedom is called in question when an interpretation is placed upon the vows of the Ordinal, foreign to their original intent, as if they were a business contract with a corporation in accordance with whose terms the clergy resign their freedom in Christ for certain material considerations, instead of a guarantee of Christian freedom, as in the intention of the Reformers they were meant to be.

The difficulty about the Virgin-birth is but a symptom of a profounder disturbance which threatens to shift the base on which the Church was restored to its pristine purity at the Reformation. It is a difficulty not wholly created by the "higher criticism" or

engendered solely by scientific distrust of the miraculous. An effort has been made in the following paper to trace the difficulty to its remoter source in the history of theology in the ancient Church. It was through misinterpretation of the Virgin-birth and the undue prominence assigned to it that the transition was made to the sterile form of Byzantine Christianity or to the impotency of the Latin Church in the ages preceding the Reformation.

There is no denial in this treatise of the Virgin-birth. It is accepted as the miraculous or supernatural mode by which God became incarnate in Christ, as the resurrection and the empty tomb mark the exodus of Christ from the world. But criticism is directed against the misinterpretation of the Gospel of the Infancy or against arguments used for its support which not only go beyond God's Word written, but give to it a prominence which changes the perspective of the Christian faith as revealed in Scripture. The Apostles' Creed needs to be supplemented by the postulate of the larger faith in the primary and essential importance of the life of Christ, and not only of His birth and passion, — His life and character, His deeds and teaching; in other words, the historical Christ portrayed

for us in the Gospels. Out of this study is now arising a new conviction in the Divine leadership of Christ and of His mission to subdue the world unto Himself.

Attention needs to be called anew, and constantly called, to the distinctive character of the Anglican Church as differing fundamentally from the Roman Church on the one hand, and from the churches of Puritan descent on the other. Hence the preliminary chapter of this treatise is devoted to an effort describing the ruling ideas of the Church of England as incorporated in the Book of Common Prayer. The pressure of Puritan opinion and prejudice is in America so great and widely diffused and its attitude tacitly assumed to be identical with Christianity itself, that the Anglican Church has been and is at a disadvantage, and some of its cardinal truths regarded as no better than a baptized Paganism. The Church, also, suffers from being regarded as a diluted form of Romanism. It is neither one nor the other. Romanism and Puritanism are more closely related in their deeper spirit to each other than is the Anglican Church related to either.

A recent English writer has given the following hopeful estimate of Anglicanism and

its possibilities, and his words may apply to the American Episcopal Church as well: —

> "It [the Church of England] can go forth courageously and face the world as it is, believing that God's revelation of Himself once made in the person of Christ Jesus is being continually explained to man by that progressive revelation of God's purpose which is continually being made by the Divine Government of the world. Steadfast in its hold on the faith and on the Sacraments by its unbroken link with the past, it exists for the maintenance of God's truth and its application to the needs of man, not for the purpose of upholding its own power. A Church fitted for free men, training them in knowledge and in reverence alike; disentangling the spirit from the form, because of its close contact with sons who love their mother and frankly speak out their minds; not wandering among formulæ, however beautiful, which have lost their meaning; finding room increasingly for every form of devotional life, but training its graces into close connection with men's endeavors and

aspirations; having no object of its own which it cannot explain and make manifest as being for the highest good of all. Afraid of nothing; receptive of new impulses; quick, watchful, alert; proving all things and ever ready to give a reason for its principles and for their application; exhorting, persuading, convincing; so rooted in the past that it is strong in the present, and ever more hopeful for the future. For the great work of the Church of Christ is to mould the future, and so hasten the coming of the Kingdom. Its eyes are turned to the past for instruction and warning, not for imitation. Steadfast in the faith, built upon the foundation which its Master laid, it can speak the truth in love, using such words and methods as men can best understand; so penetrated by the importance of its message that it can speak it in manifold ways, to men of varying tempers and knowledge and feelings, but striving to speak it in such a way that the method of its teaching ever elevates and invigorates the taught. . . . Our difficulties and differences arise because we have not a sufficiently lofty concep-

tion of the destiny of the English Church. If any disaster befalls it, the record that shall be written hereafter will be that English Churchmen of this our day were not sufficiently large-hearted and high-minded to recognize the greatness of the heritage which was theirs."

CAMBRIDGE,
January 26, 1907.

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FREEDOM IN THE CHURCH

Freedom in the Church

CHAPTER I

RULING PRINCIPLES OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE AGE OF THE REFORMATION

Among the more important changes which the Church made at the Reformation constituting its characteristics as the national Church of England, with which the American Episcopal Church is in agreement, are these: —

In the first place the Augustinian theology in its dogmatic limitation was rejected, by making the emphatic assertion, which went to the root of Augustinianism and of the Calvinism then rising into power, that humanity had been potentially redeemed in Christ, or in the words of the Church Catechism, "I learn to believe in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and *all mankind*." For this was the negation of both Augustine and Calvin, that mankind had not been redeemed; that the world still lay under the curse and was a lost and ruined world even after the advent of Christ; that redemption

was still something to be achieved, — it had been made possible for some, it had not actually been accomplished for all mankind or for the world. This thought of an actual and universal redemption occurs again in the prayer of general thanksgiving: "We thank Thee for the *redemption of the world* by our Lord Jesus Christ." In the light of this truth, the dogmas of election, preterition, or reprobation lose their severity and change their character; embodying the inevitable comment on the realities of life, demanding recognition for their spiritual value; their modification or rejection when they become hinderances to the Christian life. (Article XVII.[1])

Having got rid of the great negation which had kept the world in bondage in the Middle Ages, and was again in its Calvinistic form

[1] One of the common objections to the Thirty-nine Articles is that they teach (Art. XVII) the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. But when this Article is prefaced, as it should be, by the larger doctrine of the Church Catechism, that *Christ "hath redeemed me and all mankind,"* its language assumes the tone of common life, of literature, rather than of dogma. It is true, and who would have it otherwise, that the assurance of being called (vocation) is a most blessed one; while those who have it not are warned against the danger involved in dwelling upon its absence from their experience. Theology like this is not Calvinistic, nor Arminian; it is the attitude of a great Church, based upon the Gospel and illustrated by the realities of life.

threatening human freedom in the age of the Reformation, the Anglican Church reproduces the ancient Catholic charter of human freedom, — the doctrine of the Trinity. In no other church in Christendom is so great prominence given to this central all-inclusive doctrine. In almost every part of the Prayer Book it appears, it is the constant, ever-recurring refrain, it opens the service, it is appended to every psalm and canticle, it is the essence of the creeds, the formula of blessing. It would not have been made so prominent if it were not closely connected with that which is most dear to every human heart, freedom from fear in the inner life of the soul, and freedom from the shackles without, from every tyranny whether of church or state. For the doctrine brings freedom by the proclamation of the coequality of the Son with the Father; since Christ therefore is placed above kings; and thrones must henceforth retain their power by obedience to the will of Christ, — as the Lord Christ hath commanded. On this basis kingship in the English nation rested, and on this foundation it stood secure.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the Magna Charta of ecclesiastical and religious liberty as against any invasion of liberty proceeding from

the secular throne. So long as kings acknowledge Christ as their head and master, the process must be toward emancipation of peoples from every form of bondage. But there were other forms of bondage which hampered the intellect and the conscience and prevented men from entering into the full possession of their inheritance. And one of these was an ancient error which obscured the Lordship of Christ and tended to make His presence and power inoperative. The Anglican Church set forth anew the doctrine of the Incarnation, and placed it again on an historic basis, by refusing any longer to ascribe to the Virgin Mother titles or attributes which exalted her above her Son — or led to her worship and finally to her practical installation in the place of Christ. This was one of the chief sources of evil in the Church before the Reformation, nullifying the Christian faith, tending to reduce it to the old nature worship of the heathen world. The Anglican Church directed the axe to the root of the evil when it rejected from its formularies the title *Mother of God* (θεοτόκος) as applied to Mary. Another designation of Mary, as "ever Virgin," was also rejected. The absence of these designations is striking, when one compares the Anglican ritual with the unreformed ritual of

the Greek and Roman churches, where, and especially in the Greek offices, the terms "Mother of God" and "ever Virgin" are of frequent occurrence. Allowance should be made for a certain exuberance among Oriental peoples, where Western Christendom is more reserved. Thus in the Greek Church, the title "Brother of God" is given to St. James. St. Jerome did not hesitate to call a certain woman whose daughter had become a nun the "mother-in-law of God"; Joachim and Anna were the "grandparents of God." But whether the title "Mother of God" is or is not restricted in its use, it is misleading, and the Anglican Church rejected it altogether. On this point more will be said hereafter. The rejection of the term "Mother of God," as applied to Mary, and the rejection of her worship as well, left the way open for a more historic and intelligible view of the incarnation by which the power of Christ, as the Word made flesh, was enhanced.

The use of the phrase "Mother of God" (θεοτόκος) had been sanctioned by General Councils in the ancient church; but the Church of England was not intimidated by this circumstance in the effort to promote the freedom of her children

from every form of bondage. Thus in regard to the authority of General Councils, it is declared in Article XXI: —

> "Forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed by the spirit and Word of God, they *may* err, and *sometimes have erred*, even in things pertaining to God. Wherefore things ordered by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture." [1]

[1] Something of the attitude of the English Reformers, in regard to General Councils, may be inferred from the circumstances that the famous words of Gregory of Nazianzum were cited when the call of the Pope for a General Council at Mantua was under discussion in 1537. That Gregory was prejudiced and sore at heart over his own personal experience does not diminish the significance of recalling his words at the moment when it was attempted to heal the difficulties of the time by resort to a council. In writing to the Emperor, Theodosius, Gregory had remarked that he shunned all councils: "I have never yet seen that any synod had a good ending, or that the evils complained of were removed but were rather multiplied. Since the spirit of dispute and the love of power (and do not think I am using too strong language) are exhibited there beyond all powers of description." And again, "I keep myself at a distance from them, since I have found by experience that most of them (to express myself in moderation) are not worth much." Cf. "Life of Gregory," by Ullman, p. 241; and Burnet, "History of the Reformation," i. 353.

From this statement coupled with the rejection of the phrase "Mother of God" from her formularies, it is to be inferred that on this point the Anglican Church regarded the Fourth General Council as having actually erred in things pertaining to God. The implications of that unfortunate phrase led to the degeneration of theology and to the lowering of the tone of spiritual and moral life, from the fifth century onward. The designation "Mother of God" was rejected at the Reformation not only by the Anglican Church, but by the Lutheran Church, and by the Reformed Church in all its branches.

The Anglican Church subjected the decisions of General Councils to the authority of Scripture; but she went further than this in the effort to get rid of that vague, undetermined, and indeterminable authority known as "Catholicity," which haunted the Reformers as it haunts their descendants to-day. And again, in Scripture, as the Word of God, the relief and escape were found. In the VIIIth Article it is declared that "The three creeds, the Nicene Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed, for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture."

What is significant here is the abandonment of the authority of the Catholic Church as the ground or warrant for their acceptance.[1]

The Anglican Reformation gave a new definition of the "Catholic Church" as that phrase finds expression in the creeds. Hitherto it had been understood in different ways, — the Greek Church and the Roman Church each claiming to be exclusively the Catholic Church, each denouncing the other as heretical and schismatic. According to this new, enlarged and Biblical conception given in the XIXth Article, —

> "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."

The Catholic Church is further defined in the "Prayer for all sorts and conditions of men": —

> "More especially we pray for the good estate of the Catholic Church; that it may be

[1] The American Episcopal Church omitted the Athanasian Creed, but retains the VIIIth Article in other respects unchanged.

so guided and governed by thy Good Spirit, that *all who profess and call themselves Christians* may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." [1]

In the "Bidding Prayer," given in the Canons of 1604, set forth by authority of Convocation, the definition of the Catholic Church is more explicit still: —

"In all sermons, lectures, and homilies, the preachers and ministers shall move the people to join with them in prayer in this form or to this effect as briefly as conveniently they may: Ye shall pray for Christ's holy Catholic Church, that is, for the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world." (*Canon* 55.)

Of this Church, composed of all Christian people, it is further alleged that no organized branch is infallible: —

[1] In the American Episcopal Church, the word "universal" is substituted for "Catholic." The same usage had been adopted in the creeds by the Lutheran Church.

> "As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred, so also the Roman Church hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith." (Article XX.)

The infallibility which the Anglican Church refuses to the ancient historic churches, she does not claim for herself. Infallibility is no longer to be held as a mark of the Church. Everything must be tested by the appeal to Scripture. There are things, however, which are not contained in Scripture, such as rites and ceremonies. In respect of these, the Church of England claimed authority, — "the power to decree rites and ceremonies, and also authority in controversies of faith." But here again, the higher authority is invoked: "It is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written." (Article XX.) And of the discipline and worship, as well as of the doctrine, the Anglican Church has ordered that they be ministered "as Christ hath commanded," and "according to the commandment of God," which means that the commandments of men have been set aside.

It must be borne in mind that in the Reformation, the old scholasticism of the ancient church and the Middle Ages still bore heavily upon the minds and consciences of those who had received the "new learning," and who, by the study of Greek, had seen a new meaning in Scripture. The tendency of the Reformation was away from dogmatic subtleties and refinements to the intellectual freedom and the larger life of the modern world. The purpose of the Reformation was primarily religious and ethical; and wherever in the Prayer Book the reformers introduced comment or exhortation, the stress was laid upon the moral duties of life and the character of the Christian man. No contrast in the history of theology is more striking than this oasis of the epoch of the Reformation, between the cumbrous scholasticism of the mediæval world, as developed, for example, by Thomas Aquinas, where unwarranted intellectual inferences were raised to the equality with divine revelation; this, on the one hand, and the scholasticism of the seventeenth century, whether in the Anglican Church, the Lutheran, or the Reformed. The hyper-orthodoxy of the seventeenth century, with its excessive intellectualism, represented among the Puritans by the Westminster Confession, or by such writers as

Pearson in the Church of England, or by the more luxuriant forms which the same tendency took in Germany, prepared the way for the descent of the eighteenth century into every phase of scepticism or unbelief. Deism was the natural sequence of the ultra orthodox, dogmatic spirit which has made the seventeenth century unattractive, obnoxious, and almost unintelligible.

The Church of England cannot be understood or appreciated unless this circumstance be borne in mind. The influence of Erasmus was felt in England more powerfully than in his own country, and the Erasmian tendency was toward the ethical and undogmatic side of the Christian faith as brought out in his Enchiridion. His Paraphrase of the New Testament was placed in the churches, to be read for the light it threw on Scripture. During the first half of the sixteenth century the warfare was kept up against the old scholastic dogmatism, till it became discredited and fell into the obloquy from which it has never emerged. This dogmatic bondage was one of the evils which the men of the "new learning" were seeking to overcome; among them Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to whom we owe the Book of Common Prayer, and whose influence pervades the Thirty-

nine Articles. The result is a certain undogmatic character in the formularies of the Anglican Church, which has been one of its greater charms for thoughtful minds. The Christian verities are there and each in its due proportion, but they are stated in undogmatic ways, in the language of religion and of life, rather than of theology. The atonement of Christ is impressively set forth in the office for the administration of the Lord's Supper, but nowhere is any theory or doctrine of the atonement presented, — Anselmic, Grotian, or any other. And did we not keep this point in view, it would seem extraordinary that the Anglican Church, while giving supreme importance to Scripture, nowhere lays down any rule for the interpretation of Scripture or any theory of inspiration. Puritans and Lutherans and Romanists might look askance, as indeed they did at such a church, but wisdom is justified of her children. The Anglican Church became in consequence the most comprehensive church in Christendom, free in spirit and in truth, trusting to the instincts which demand the Christian faith in its simplicity, and for the rest, building upon and appealing to "sound learning," as at once her justification and defence. What Lord Bacon was to science in opening up a new world of thought and research,

free from the trammels of the preceding ages, that the Church of England was for true religion and piety and a consecrated learning, whose aim was truth and reality as more important than any figments of imagination however imposing. Scripture became the guarantee against an ecclesiastical rationalism claiming to improve on God's Word written; a strong tower of defence, from the invasion of the scholastic tendency, — "the Word of God" and "containing all things necessary to salvation." The Church of England, says Bishop Creighton, "did not commit the fatal error of erecting a system, strong in an appearance of unchangeable organization, possessed with an answer to every question, and claiming infallible authority. It laid down decidedly enough the truths of the Catholic faith, it retained every vestige of primitive practice and of primitive organization; but it left ample room for liberty and did not pretend to remove from the individual his due share of responsibility. Its great process of reformation was carried out by the recognition of a growth of knowledge. The wisdom of that decision has been abundantly proved by its results."

The undogmatic attitude of the Church of England may be further illustrated when the comparison is made with other churches. The Roman Church has a voluminous Catechism set forth by the Council of Trent, covering almost every point of controversy in the experience of a thousand years, and another large treatise containing the numerous theological definitions of Trent, together with the long dogmatic creed of Pius IV, which was thought necessary in addition to the shorter ancient creeds. And these large commentaries are in striking contrast with the very short Catechism of the Church of England and the brief Articles of Religion, contained in a few pages of the Prayer Book. The same contrast is noted in the case of the Greek Church, where, in addition to the definitions and decrees of eight General Councils held to be infallible, there is the "Orthodox Confession of the Eastern Church," containing one hundred and twenty-six questions answered at great length; the elaborate "Confession of Dositheus," being "the eighteen decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem"; and the "Longer Catechism of the Orthodox Catholic Eastern Church," which is in itself alone a considerable volume. Or, in the case of the Puritan churches, it is suggestive to note how Catechism and Articles in the Prayer Book

form less than a hundredth part in length of the Confession and the Longer and Shorter Catechisms set forth at Westminster.

The contrast is still more impressive when we turn to the order and discipline of the Anglican Church. Here the reformers were engaged in emancipating the Church from the authority of the Papacy and also from that hard fixed dogmatic system of the Middle Ages, — the work of monastic students shut up in their cloisters and detached from the larger realities of life. Let any one turn to the office for consecrating a bishop in the Roman Church, and compare it with the same office in the Prayer Book, and the depth and extent of the revolution accomplished will be manifest. In the Roman ordinal, out of seventeen interrogations put to the bishop-elect, nine are concerned with his faith on individual points of belief. It is not enough to ask if he accepts the Nicene creed, but each article is recited, and expanded to cover ancient doctrinal controversies, and to each of these the elect must answer, "Credo." In the Anglican ordinal all this is omitted, and these interrogatories are substituted: —

"Are you persuaded that *the Holy Scriptures* contain all doctrine required as necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? And are you determined out of the *same Holy Scriptures* to instruct the people committed to your charge; and to teach or maintain nothing as necessary to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the same?

"Will you *then* faithfully exercise yourself in *the Holy Scriptures* and call upon God by prayer for the true understanding of the same; so that you may be able by them to teach and exhort with wholesome doctrine and to withstand and convince the gainsayers?

"Are you ready with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrine *contrary to God's Word;* and both privately and openly to call upon and encourage others to the same?"

Even more illuminating is the contrast between the "Ordering of Priests," in the Anglican Church, and the "Ordaining of a Presbyter" (*De Ordinatione Presbyterii*), in the Roman

Church. In the latter, the candidates for ordination standing before the altar make the profession of their faith by reciting the Apostles' Creed. It is not expected of them that they be familiar with the intricacies of doctrine or the history of heresies. That is reserved for the bishop alone. No promise is exacted of them that they shall study Holy Scripture or recognize their responsibility to defend the faith.

In the Anglican office the candidate recites no creed, as a profession of the faith he is to preach. The vows he takes are modelled after those in the office for consecrating a bishop, and they give the supreme place, not to creeds or doctrines, but to Holy Scripture.

> "Are you persuaded that *the Holy Scriptures* contain all doctrine required as necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? And are you determined out of the *said Scriptures* to instruct the people committed to your charge; and to teach nothing as essential to salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by *the Scripture?*
>
> "Will you *then* give your faithful diligence always so to minister the Doctrine and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ,

as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church hath received the same according to the commandments of God?

"Will you be ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to *God's Word?*

"Will you be diligent in prayers and in reading *the Holy Scriptures* and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same?"

In these two offices, the "Consecration of Bishops" and the "Ordering of Priests," we have the emancipation of the bishop and the presbyter from ancient or mediæval Catholicism. The bishop is set free from the domination of the papacy, to which for hundreds of years a vow of subjection had been taken; and the original equality of the episcopate is restored. In the case of the presbyter, a great step forward was taken when the responsibility was placed upon him equally with the bishop to defend the *faith, as the Lord hath commanded* and as this Church hath received the same according to the commandments of God. This was the presbyter's emancipation from an ignorance and irresponsibility which had weakened and dis-

credited the Church before the Reformation; and Holy Scripture was to be the agency which should bring the freedom.

Nowhere in the formularies of the Anglican Church is it creeds on which the stress is laid, but rather the Scriptures, as the word of God containing all things necessary to salvation. On this point the Reformers had learned a lesson from the formularies in the reign of Henry VIII, where it was shown what an agent for the tyrannical suppression of thought and freedom of inquiry, a creed, even the Apostles' Creed, might be. For a man also might recite creeds and dogmas, and be most loyal in defending without understanding them; but when Holy Scripture became the test and standard, it must needs be carefully and closely and continuously studied in order to its interpretation, and "sound learning" became essential.

This change in the position of the presbyter of the Anglican Church as compared with the Roman priesthood or the Greek, has been commented on by Dr. Hampden, late bishop of Hereford, and the comment is important and deserves to be cited:—

> "Among other solemn pledges which they [the clergy] are required to give at their

ordination to the Priesthood, is that very remarkable one, that they will 'banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's word.' . . . I call this a very remarkable injunction of the service for the ordination of Priests; because in no other Church is the like commission given to any but to the highest order of the Ministry, the bishops of the Church, exclusively. Neither in the Greek forms of ordination, nor in the Roman Pontifical, do we find any such charge given to the Ministers of the inferior orders, but only to the bishops. All that is exacted of the priest and deacon, according to the formularies of the Greek and Roman Churches, is the promise of obedience to the bishop. . . . At the Reformation, accordingly, a great change was introduced in this respect. . . . Under the previous system the mass of the clergy were incapable of instructing the people. . . . It was rare to find any who could preach to the people. . . . The Reformation corrected this evil."

The Church of England is preëminently a layman's church, more so than any other church in Christendom. If bishops and clergy were

emancipated and set free from what had become the bondage of Rome, still greater was the emancipation secured to the laity. In the ancient Church and in the mediæval they had no part in the government of the Church or in the determination of its formularies. It was a common mode of speech to designate the clergy as *spirituales*, the laity as *carnales*. All this was changed at the Reformation. It was the laity who took the first steps toward separating the English Church from the authority of Rome, and who finally completed the process. It was by the laity that the Prayer Book was approved and its use made binding. The prominence of the laity in all the changes wrought at the Reformation gives a distinctive character to the Anglican Church as compared with the other reformed churches.

But in no respect was the revolution made so manifest as in the one supreme act by which the Book of Common Prayer was put into the hands of the people, as the laymen's book no less than that of the clergy. Hitherto such a thing was unknown. Primers were sometimes issued for the instruction of the laity, but at the Reformation, all the offices of the Church, rendered into English, were placed in their hands. What had hitherto been the priests' book was

henceforth to be the possession of all, men, women, and children alike. In the unreformed offices, the clergy responded to the clergy, and to say "Amen" was the only participation of the people. In the Prayer Book the people respond to the clergy on equal terms. The clergy appear acting as the people's representative.

There is a profound spiritual principle involved in this far-reaching change. It is sometimes said by those who are ignorant of the Anglican Church, that in the Reformation she put forth no distinctive doctrine. The Zwinglian Church magnified the glory and majesty of God; the Lutheran Church set forth as its controlling principle, the truth of "justification by faith"; the Reformed Church built upon the Divine will as expressed in decrees of predestination. But a great act characterizes the Anglican Church — the making of a book whose possession by the people becomes a means of education, of enlightenment, and of Christian nurture. And beneath this act lies a doctrine or truth, which involves what is essential in the teaching of Christ — *the priesthood of all Christians*, who now offer spiritual sacrifices to God, of themselves, and not through another. In the light of this truth, the agency of the clergy is subordinate. In the mutual response of people and

clergy lies the visible and outward sign of Anglican worship, as contrasted with Greek or Roman or Puritan worship, where the isolated officiant at the altar or in the pulpit alone is speaking and the people are silent.

It is another distinguishing mark of the Reformation in the Church of England, that it was not overcome by a reactionary tendency, as was the case in the Reformed Church, and to a certain extent also in the Lutheran Church. The Anglican Church retained what Christian piety had accumulated during the Christian ages in the line of devotion and in the Christian ordering of time, or in the æsthetic and impressive arrangement of its worship. But there was a cleansing and a purification; whatever was contrary to the Word of God was rejected; whatever harmonized with it was retained. The Prayer Book was not an accidental or fortuitous production, but the work of one who devoted many years to liturgical study, and who by practical experience knew the impressive points in breviary or missal, and felt the impressive features which carried a religious and Christian appeal. The Prayer Book became through Cranmer's influence a constructive work of literary skill and of artistic merit as well as

a summary of religious devotion. It was done also at the right moment in history, a moment which unavailed of would have been lost forever. The juncture of the new and the old constituted a plastic creative hour; and the man met the hour, who was devoted to the Christian faith as revealed in Scripture, but who without prejudice or reactionary tendency was able and glad to discern in the religious consciousness of the past whatever bound it to the present or to the future. No great and pure religious instinct was overlooked. Indeed there was some concession to the weakness of those with whom past associations were too sacred to be sundered sharply or rudely.

Thus in the stately offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, constituting the staple and normal worship of the people, it is the forgiveness of God which is offered; and in the Reformation, it was God's forgiveness, and not that of the Church or of the priesthood, which was most desired and needed, and most highly valued. But for those with whom the consciousness of God was weak or who shrank from the Divine approach, those who were sick or at the point of death, the forgiveness of man was allowed, as in the phrase of the form of absolution of the thirteenth century, — *ego te absolvo*. It

is something to be valued — the forgiveness of man as representing the Church; but there is a higher forgiveness for which the soul hungers in its highest mood, which no lower forgiveness will satisfy. But this is one of the few concessions to the religious mood bred by mediævalism. For the predominant note in the Prayer Book is God, revealed in the sacred and eternal Trinity, — the divine love and the divine forgiveness; and the response of man implies the cultivation of moral character, as what God desires. It is this which lends dignity and weight to the exhortations distributed throughout the book.

Another feature giving high distinction and value to the Prayer Book is its conservative tone, which becomes a strong apologetic for the Christian faith. To discard the devotions of past ages, in the effort at reform, would have implied that the work of Christ had been in great part a failure, that the Church preserved no continuous faith or life. Such a temptation, and it existed, Cranmer rose above — even if circumstances had not favored his purpose. He could believe that the churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria had erred in matters of the faith, that the Church of Rome had grievously erred; but he also believed that they had conserved the Christian faith to a saving extent,

and that they remained true churches, despite their errors. He could hold that General Councils had erred in matters of faith, and yet retain for them high reverence as having set forth and maintained the fundamental truth of the co-equality of the Son with the Father.

In the age of the Reformation the Bible was distinguished from other books, as the Word of God. It was the Word of God, when compared with ecclesiastical traditions which were the commandments of men; the Word of God as revealing the Divine will, and because the scope of the whole is to give all glory to God; the Word of God, because it contained all things necessary to salvation; the Word of God, pre-eminently, for it carried the portrait of Christ, the life and character and teaching of Him who is the Word of God made flesh and dwelling among men. Further than this the Anglican Church did not go. It makes no answer to the questions, How or Why. It offers no theory of inspiration, no dogma as to mode of composition of the various books, their date, or their authorship. It is content to trust the Scriptures to the clergy and laity for their devout study, throwing on them the individual responsibility for the interpretation of its contents, by the aid of sound

learning, and by the use of such helps as minister to the knowledge of the same. In its conception of the Bible the Anglican Church differs from the unreformed churches, Greek and Roman, in not placing tradition or the creeds above the Bible, or in valuing the Bible chiefly as the bulwark of the creeds, in accordance with which its interpretation must be confined. Hence there is no sensitiveness, no fear about the Bible, as with those who subordinate it to the creeds. The Anglican Church has made no effort to guard the Bible by theory, definition, or dogma. Not even its infallibility is asserted. It is Romanism or Puritanism which asserts the inspiration of all and every part of Scripture.[1] Theories about the Bible devised in the seventeenth century, and chiefly by divines of the Puritan school or by Lutheran theologians, are very often attributed to the Anglican Church, and fastened upon her, by a preponderating sentiment from without her pale, which it is sometimes hard to resist. But the most careful search of Anglican standards reveals no trace of them. It must be remembered in this connection, that in the age of the Reformation, while the Bible was held in love and reverence, yet

[1] Cf. "Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent," Session IV, "Westminster Confession," Ch. 1.

there was also greater freedom in its interpretation than in the age which followed. Luther's Biblical criticism to a later age would appear like the destructive attack of modern rationalism. He thought it a matter of indifference whether or not Moses wrote the Pentateuch. He compared the books of Scripture with each other and assigned them a relative importance according to their subject-matter or their mode of treatment. To the Gospel of St. John he gave the preference above the Synoptics, and thought the Epistles of St. Paul of greater authority than the gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, or St. Luke. If one had St. John's Gospel and St. Paul's Epistles, he had all that it was necessary to know. He found no inspiration in the Epistles of James or Jude, or in the Book of Revelation. The test with Luther was the appreciation of the Person and work of Christ. Our view has changed about the relative value of the books of Scripture; but what it is important to recognize here, is that opinions, such as those of Luther, were well known in England at the time when our formularies were issued, and may be responsible for the somewhat cautious and moderate language used in defining Scripture, as the "Word of God, containing all things necessary to salvation." Cranmer, who is re-

sponsible for the phrase, was familiar with the new learning of his time; he was a scholar also, and had the moderation of one who looked at a subject in its different aspects. To his mind the unity of Scripture lay in the presentation of Christ, by anticipation in the Old Testament and by its fulfilment in the New. "Both in the old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man" (Article VII).

On this point, Dr. Creighton, the late bishop of London, has remarked: —

> "The Church of England stands in a remarkably free attitude toward the progress of human learning. It has nothing to conceal and shrinks from no inquiry. No religious organization attaches a higher importance to Holy Scripture or venerates more highly its authority; but it has never committed itself to any theory concerning the mode in which Scripture was written or the weight to be attached to it for any other purpose than that of ascertaining all that is necessary to salvation. That the Scriptures contain God's revelation to man, there must be no doubt; but the Church

of England has never erected any artificial barrier against inquiry into the mode in which that revelation was made, into the method and degree in which God's spirit made use of human instruments, into the way in which national records were penetrated with a sense of the divine purpose. It is true that assumptions have been made on these points and others. Men have always asked questions and have given themselves answers to the best of their capacity. Such answers are of the nature of hypotheses, founded on the best knowledge available, but capable of extension or alteration as knowledge advances." [1]

The fear and the disquiet caused by Biblical criticism are overcome when we concentrate attention on the essence of the Christian faith as consisting in the Person of the Christ, who is the "Way, the Truth, and the Life." The Bible is the divinely ordered record of that Person. We read the Bible that it may show us Christ, and that by prayer and study and meditation Christ may grow in our hearts by faith.

[1] "The Church and the Nation," pp. 78, 79.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL VARIATIONS IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CREED

I

1. THE creed commonly called the Apostles' Creed took its origin in Rome about the middle of the second century, and may in a general way be regarded as a summary of those convictions regarding the Christian faith in the strength of which the rising Catholic Church overcame the heathenism of the Roman Empire in the West. Viewed from this point, it is seen to include two unique statements which never gained formal entrance into Eastern creeds, but were for the Western Church embodiments of profound and influential conviction. These two statements, so difficult for the modern mind to receive, but of the highest significance in the ancient Church, are the "descent into hell" (*descendit ad inferos*), and the "resurrection of the body" (*resurrectionem carnis*).[1] In their origin and in their

[1] The translation, "the resurrection of the *body*," is found in the "Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man,"

development, they were the expression of vital belief in the ancient and the early mediæval Church. Long before its insertion in the creed, the "descent into hell" was associated with the conviction that Christ had not only been actually born into this lower world and had actually died on the cross, and had made this world His own; but that He also had ranged through the universe, as the victorious, unconquerable Son of God, who, in the power of immortal youth, had visited every place where human souls were to be found, even hades and hell; that He had met the evil spirit, the enemy of man, and had routed him from his stronghold. Then, when the under world had yielded up its contents to Him, began the upward movement. Henceforth souls ascended instead of going down into the lower parts of the world. Heaven was revealed, — an unknown sphere to the ancient world. So, having accomplished His work in the under world and routed the prince of darkness, He rose up again from the dead and ascended into heaven, and He sitteth henceforth on the right hand of the Father, which implies the attitude of assured success, that evil had been conquered in its strongholds. But it also means more, — that at

put forth by the king's authority in 1543. But the original purport of the article was to lay emphasis on the *flesh*.

the right hand of the Father, He is also in the thick of the strife, ever ready to come to the aid of His Church; or, as St. Stephen, before he fell asleep, beheld Him, not sitting, but standing, as if the assault moved Him to rise in behalf of His devoted follower.

Whatever may be one's difficulty in believing in the descent into hell, the Church will not willingly yield this picture of the immortal, conquering Christ. If the dread of the evil spirit in the universe has been exorcised, it is owing to this ancient belief, or rather it is owing to the influence of Christ Himself, as His followers saw Him, when they no longer knew Him only after the flesh, but in His transfigured career throughout the universe of God. Nor does it weaken the beauty or truth of the picture when we recall how the old Roman world, from the second to the fourth century, was invaded by Mithra, to whom a similar rôle was assigned in the heathen imagination. Light has been shed on the religious ferment of that age, by researches of modern scholars.[1] Mithra is now recognized as having been a competitor for the suffrage of the Roman emperors. He appeared as an immortal youth, endowed with great beauty.

[1] Cf. Cumont, "The Mystery of Mithra."

He, too, had a miraculous entrance into the world, being born out of a rock. He ranged the universe as the champion and protector of souls, he was victorious over evil, he was related to the Sun, with whom he sat down at a banquet. His religion was popular in the army, and it is now known that his worship was practised in every, even remotest, part of the Western Empire. One advantage he had over the Christian faith, that he posed as the special friend of the empire and of Roman emperors and of the army, — the patron of the established order, who gave victory to the Roman legions. Here was his strength and here was also his weakness. When the Roman army met with successive defeats, his hold began to weaken, and after the time of Julian the Apostate (361–363) it began to disappear before the conquering Church. But what hurt the worship of Mithra most was the deep conviction of the reality of the birth and passion of Christ as enshrined in the Apostles' Creed. For Mithra never existed, and Christ had really been born and had really suffered and really died. It is of scenes like this that we are reminded as we recall the struggles of our brethren in the ancient church, resisting unreality and building on the solid foundation of historic fact.

In regard to the "resurrection of the flesh," that also takes us into the heart of that distant age, which found comfort and support in the Apostles' Creed. The belief was invading the West, coming from Oriental religion, that a sharp distinction existed and separated between soul and body, that the connection with the flesh stained the spirit and weakened its power, and that any redemption must be from the power of the flesh, in order to gain immortality. Such a conviction conditions the conception of the under-world, as in Homer and Virgil, where spirits wander aimlessly and sad, suffering from the disembodiment of death. The doctrine of the resurrection of the *flesh* was therefore a profound protest against the dreary view of Orientalism, — it meant life and hope in this world and in the other.[1] In it we may see the prophecy of modern science, attaching importance to the human body, whose results are more and more apparent in the physician's art; the basis, too, of modern painting, as it revived in the age of the Renaissance, and attached itself to what was positive in the early art of the Greeks. When

[1] How much the resurrection of the flesh implied to the old Roman world, may be seen in Tertullian's treatise, *De Resurrectione Carnis*.

we recall that, in the places where Oriental religion or Mohammedanism has prevailed, there has been no scientific study of the human body and that the healing art is still in its rudiments; or that the plastic art of painting has received no development, nor added to the pleasure and the enlightenment, to the beauty and dignity, of human life, as in Western Europe, we may be grateful for the clause in the Apostles' Creed, — the resurrection of the flesh. But this conviction has not been without solace to the religious heart. The insistence on the body of Christ with which He ascended into heaven, the insistence on the resurrection of the human body, tended to disarm death of its terrors. It was a response to an universal human instinct.

There are other features of the Apostles' Creed which, while they still retain their appeal to the Christian mind and conscience, made that appeal with intenser force, in a more realistic way, in the ancient church. Such was the conviction of the indispensable importance of the new society, which was taking the place of the old — the organization of the Church elaborated and perfected with surpassing skill and diligence. Into this new society each man was to be born by baptism, and baptism stood for an inward

purification. The kingdom of this world was passing over into the Kingdom of God, — so it began to be interpreted from an early time. Nor did the great structure of the mediæval Church in the West or the various Christian nations of the East ever lose this consciousness of a divine origin within the Church, however stagnant or debased they may appear in later ages. From the second century, the "Catholic Church" as the new society founded by Christ and intended to embrace the world was the most inspiring of convictions.

The "forgiveness of sins" has a deep significance when we recall the limitation placed upon its scope by movements such as Montanism, in the second century; but also a deeper significance when we place it over against the teaching of Gnostic sects, where forgiveness was unknown, where souls were what they were and must ever so remain in consequence of a fixed evolution or emanation in the physical order. Such was the central principle of Gnosticism, working in disguised and subtle ways, which, if it had not been excluded from the Western world, would have made progress and hope for mankind impossible. The doctrine of forgiveness strikes its roots into the civil order, reconciles man to life, gives courage and hope,

and constitutes the foundation of Christian civilization.

All these things were but the expansion of the Divine Name, or of the baptismal formula, — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; they were implications wrapped up in the new name of God. They might all be dropped or omitted, but the Name would abide, and continue to generate the forces of the spiritual life. Nor was this origin of the Creed forgotten. Ever and anon, in the Middle Ages, it is set forth as the essence of the Creed — a protest, it is possible, against the dogmatic tendency, which in advocating too exclusively this or that feature of the Creed failed to do justice to its larger character and purpose. The Fatherhood of God, the redemption of the world by Christ, the higher life of the soul begotten by the Spirit, these threefold agencies, eternal distinctions in the Divine being and operating in time, were the essence of the Christian revelation. God the Holy Ghost drawing all men into the fellowship of the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son — such was the Christian motive, which was to remake this lower world, and to bring it into harmony with the upper world, so that throughout the universe there should be unity of motive and unity of result; and the earth should aspire

to attain the fellowship and communion which constitutes the glory of heaven.

For such reasons as these the old Roman or Apostles' Creed has won the confidence and the loyalty of the Christian Church. It may be that taken in its original purport it cannot hold quite the place it did in the ancient church. The world has been revolutionized, new issues have arisen, the outlook upon life has changed. The new learning, the modern sciences, have modified our beliefs. But taking it as a whole and with a large construction, no ancient document retains such a living character and even adaptability to the needs of modern life. And as the symbol, whose summary of contents represents the process by which the Christian Church won its stupendous victory over ancient heathenism, it has an historic interest unsurpassed except by the annals of the life of Christ.

It is when we turn from a large constructive estimate of the Creed to the historical interpretation of its separate clauses, that we become aware of many divergencies of interpretation affecting almost every statement it contains. They are not evasions of its meaning nor efforts to empty its clauses of their significance. They are historical monuments of different ways of regarding the Christian revelation. They go

back to the remote Christian ages. They are not devices of modern scepticism to get rid of difficulties; nor are they efforts to vaporize doctrines by construction, in order to their denial under the guise of interpretation. The Greek and Latin churches differed from the first in their apprehension of the Christian faith, and divergencies appear in their respective commentaries on the Creeds. But the Anglican Church has no authoritative commentary, fixing the meaning of each and every clause beyond the possibility of dispute. Hence, there have arisen various modern interpretations of credal statements, which have been legitimated within the Church by the comprehensiveness which is a mark of the Church of England, as compared with the ancient historic churches, or with the Reformed churches, so far as they still hold by the Westminster or other standards. These variations give the Anglican Church its adaptedness to the varying currents of the national life in successive generations, in contrast with the stagnation of the ancient churches, which have endeavored to stereotype the one aspect under which alone the Christian faith appears to them.

II

The Apostles' Creed has been subject to diverse interpretations. It is not the question, whether it should be so; the simple fact confronts us. The clauses of the Creed have been expanded, or, to use another expression, they have been "stretched" to include modern religious thought and even divergent attitudes of opinion.

In the age of the Renaissance, the Creed suffered a severe shock when it was shown by Laurentius Valla that it was not originally composed by the twelve apostles. A tradition was thus rudely dispelled which had come down from time immemorial, clothing this venerable symbol with a sanctity to which creeds with œcumenical authority could not aspire.

The Anglican Church in the age of the Reformation laid down the ruling principle for its interpretation; but in so doing departed widely from another method of interpretation which had long prevailed. A new religious motive born at the Reformation inspired the authors of the Church Catechism as they asked and answered the *Question:* —

"What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy belief?

"*Answer:* First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world.

"Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind.

"Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all people of God."

There is here a distinction between the articles of the Creed: some are primary and essential, others are subordinate in importance. It was the mission of the Reformers to give prominence to the being of God and His activity in the world of human affairs. Inspired by this conviction they gained the courage to resist the evils bred in the unreformed church which preceded them, where the devotion to the Virgin Mary and the saints had thrown God and Christ and the Holy Spirit into the background of the human consciousness. Any one familiar with the literature of the sixteenth century knows how the age rejoiced in the sense of the Divine Presence in all life and especially in contemporaneous events,—in the coming back, as it were, of God to His church and to His world.

In one of the formularies of the English

Church, set forth before the religious reconstruction (1543), known as "The King's Book" or "The Erudition of a Christian Man," is found a similar statement to that in the later Catechism. It is attached to a comment on the first article of the Creed, — "I *believe* in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth," and the comment reads: "This manner of belief we ought to have in no creature of God, be it never so excellent, but in God only; and therefore in this Creed, the said manner of speaking is used only in the three articles which concern the three persons in Trinity, that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." [1] The passage is plainly an attempt to inject into a document, otherwise mediæval and even reactionary, the spirit of the coming reform.

For this distinction between the articles of the Creed there was a precedent in an ancient commentary on the Creed by Rufinus in the fourth century.

> "We say that we believe '*in* God the Father,' so also we say '*in* Christ,' so also '*in* the Holy Ghost.' . . . It is not said '*in*

[1] "A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man," p. 229, in "Formularies" of Faith put forth by authority during the reign of Henry VIII, Oxford, 1856.

the Holy Church,' nor '*in* the forgiveness of sins,' nor '*in* the resurrection of the flesh.' For if the preposition 'in' had been added, it would have had the same force as in the preceding articles. But now in those clauses in which the faith concerning the Godhead is declared, we say '*in* God the Father,' and '*in* Jesus Christ, His Son,' and '*in* the Holy Ghost.' But in the rest where we speak not of the Godhead, but of creatures and mysteries, the preposition '*in*' is not added. We do not say 'we believe in the Holy Church,' but we believe the Holy Church not as God but as the Church gathered together to God; and 'we believe that there is forgiveness of sins,' and 'we believe that there will be a resurrection of the flesh.' By this monosyllabic preposition, therefore, the Creator is distinguished from the creatures, and things divine are separated from things human."[1]

In the Nicene Creed this important distinction has been in some details of the Creed preserved. Thus, —

[1] "Expos. Sym. Apost.," 36.

"I *believe in* the Holy Ghost . . . and I *believe* one Catholic and Apostolic Church, I *acknowledge* one baptism, . . . and I *look for* the resurrection of the dead." [1]

The Apostles' Creed, as has already been said, was in its origin an expansion of the formula of baptism, — "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And this distinction between what was given by divine revelation and the comment added by the Church has never wholly disappeared from the liturgical or other offices. During the Middle Ages, in the Western Church, the distinction is preserved between the catechetical and the baptismal Creed: and the latter was short and did not go much beyond the Divine Name.[2] In the present Roman office for Baptism is found the same distinction. At the opening of the office the full Apostles' Creed is recited liturgically, but when it comes to Baptism the shorter creed is adopted, which runs as follows in interrogatory manner: —

[1] In a translation of the Creed made by Cranmer, with great care, is the reading: "I believe in the Holy Ghost; and that *there* is an Holy Catholic Church; . . . and that there *shall* be resurrection of the body."

[2] Cf. Swainson, "The Creeds of the Church," 179 ff., for the prevalence of other and shorter creeds and their use at baptism.

"Credis in Deum, patrem omnipotentem, creatorem cœli et terræ?

"Credis in Jesum Christum, Filium ejus unicum, Dominum nostrum, natum et passum?

"Credis et in Spiritum Sanctum, sanctam ecclesiam Catholicam, Sanctorum communionem, remissionem peccatorum, carnis resurrectionem, et vitam æternam?"

"It would appear," says Swainson, "that, before the Reformation, the Apostles' Creed, as we have it now, was never used at baptism, either as a declaratory, or as an interrogatory Creed." The baptismal creed or confession in the time of Cyprian († 258) read as follows: "Dost thou believe in God the Father, in (His) Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit? Dost thou believe in remission of sins and eternal life through the Church?" The Catholic Church could not depart so widely, as in the Roman Creed, from the simple confessions in the Apostolic Age, without an echo down through the centuries reminding of the earlier simplicity of the Christian faith. Thus in the fourth century, in the book "De Sacramentis," ascribed to St. Ambrose: "Thou wast asked, Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty? Thou didst an-

swer, I believe; and thou wast baptized, *i.e.* thou wast buried. Again thou wast asked, Dost thou believe also in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His cross? Thou saidst, I believe; and thou wast baptized, *i.e.* together with Christ thou wast buried. Again thou wast asked, Dost thou believe also in the Holy Ghost? Thou saidst, I believe; and a third time thou wast immersed, that the triple confession should remove the multiplied lapse of thy earlier life." In the Middle Ages the same echo was heard, as in the reference by Facundus of Hermiane (c. 550) to this short form of baptismal profession: — "they believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ His Son, and in the Holy Spirit." [1]

The Anglican Church has only made the

[1] Cf. Swainson, "The Nicene and Apostles' Creeds," pp. 20, 22, 24. Swainson has given several specimens of these shorter creeds, used at baptism, down to the ninth century. Thus in the Gelasian Sacramentary used by Thomasius, belonging apparently to the eighth century, the baptismal creed ran as follows: "Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty? I believe. Dost thou believe also in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, born and suffered? I believe. And dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Church, Remission of Sins, the Resurrection of the Flesh? I believe." In this creed are omitted the words "Creator of heaven and earth," "conceived by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary," "under Pontius Pilate," and so to the end of the part relating to our Lord, were omitted and so were the clauses or words "Catholic," "the Communion of Saints, Life everlasting."

ancient distinction more emphatic by requiring every child to learn that what the Creed teaches *chiefly* is the Divine Name, — the Father who creates, the Son who redeems, and the Holy Ghost who sanctifies. Whenever the Creed is recited, this reduction to its essential purpose is to be borne in mind.

In the seventeenth century, which may be called the age of Protestant Scholasticism, following so closely the greater age of creative activity and reconstruction, we meet an exaggerated intellectualism, which may be seen not only in the famous Westminster Confession, but infected almost every important theological writer, whether in England or on the Continent. Under the spell of this over intellectualism, the important distinction made by the Prayer Book was overlooked as if it did not exist or were no longer tenable. Thus Bishop Pearson († 1686) in opening his "Exposition of the Creed" remarks: —

> "As the first word *Credo*, I believe, giveth a denomination to the whole Confession of Faith, from thence commonly called the Creed, so is the same word to be imagined not to stand only where it is expressed but to be carried through the whole body of the

> Confession. For although it be but twice actually rehearsed yet we must conceive it virtually prefixed to the head of every article."

Bishop Pearson was not unaware that in the ancient church a distinction had been made between the articles of the Creed, but he does seem oblivious to the fact that the same distinction had been made in the Church Catechism. He refers to St. Augustine who had taught that to *believe in* God, meant not only assent to the truth of His existence but implied a religious act, an act of faith, love, and obedience. Thomas Aquinas had also made the same distinction, as had Peter the Lombard before him. But Bishop Pearson takes issue with them all, finding his support in texts of Scripture, for the conclusion that the distinction between *believe in* and *believe* (*credere Deum*, and *credere in Deum*) has no validity. There is no difference between faith and assent. "Faith is a habit of the intellectual part of man."

> "To believe, therefore, as the word stands in the front of the Creed, and not only so but is diffused through every article and

proposition of it, is to assent to the whole and every part of it."[1]

The exaggerated intellectualism or scholastic tendency of Bishop Pearson left its impression on his age. It was born of the same mood that produced Puritan scholasticism, the feeling that in systems of theology lay the salvation of the Church from unbelief; that the intellect could bolster up a creed which without such support was in danger of losing its hold on life. But the commentary on Protestant scholasticism is written in the age that followed, and is most instructive. The unbelief came in like a flood, known as Deism, and the spiritual life of the Church sank in the eighteenth century to its lowest ebb, until Wesley and Whitefield restored again the old meaning to the words, *I believe.*

The attitude of Pearson would indeed justify the striking comparison of the articles of the Creed to a group of precious stones, twelve in number, no less and no more. But the comparison fails, in one point at least, when we recall the fact that the American Episcopal Church gave permission in 1789 to any congregation to omit from the Creed one of its articles, "He descended into hell." The permission was with-

[1] "Exposition of the Creed," p. 19.

drawn in 1892. The omission, however, is of no special importance, if the significance of the creeds, or that which is chiefly to be learned from them according to the Anglican formularies, is the central fundamental truth — the doctrine of the Trinity. All else is subordinate to this supreme possession, as the all-inclusive formula of the Christian faith. To the three eternal distinctions in the Godhead, the words "I believe" apply with a meaning and a force, which is not carried by the minor clauses.

So long as the creeds were recited in the offices of the unreformed church by the clergy alone, whether at the altar in ordination as an ecclesiastical vow, or in the Liturgy, or at the saying of the daily office in monasteries, it might have been possible by a fixed dogmatic system, such as that of the Greek and Roman churches, to secure a certain amount of uniformity of interpretation. When the creeds came to be recited by the whole congregation in every act of public worship, as in the Anglican Church, with no commentary authorized by the Church to fix their meaning, to secure even this degree of uniformity was impossible. The history of the creeds reveals divergence of opinion on almost every article or phrase. It would require a treatise of no small dimensions to do justice to

the extent and significance of these variations. The discussion of them here must be brief and condensed.

The variations confront us at the very opening words.

GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

If there were any one point on which the mind of the ancient church was agreed, it was that God *made* the world, in opposition to heathen theories of emanation or evolution. But evolution has worked its way into the modern mind in contrast to the creation by the fiat of the divine will, if not in conflict with it. The word "made," or created, has been stretched to take in the modern conception, which changes the ancient meaning.

CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST

In regard to the mode of the Incarnation the language of ancient fathers shows diversity. This phrase was not originally in the Roman Creed, but may have been introduced by the end of the second century. It did not find its way into the Eastern creeds until after the middle of the fourth century, and its absence from the

original Nicene Creed should be noted. In his treatise on the Incarnation, Athanasius does not employ it, but attributes the divine activity to the Logos, the second person in the Trinity, who "when He was descending to us, fashioned His body for himself from a Virgin." * * * "For being himself mighty and artificer of everything, he (the Logos) prepares the body in the Virgin." ("De Incar.," 8.)

BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

As this is now among the sensitive spots in the Creed, around which controversy and agitation have gathered, the discussion of it is postponed to a later chapter, in order to a fuller treatment. But it may be said in passing, that with some the emphasis has been placed on the womanhood of Mary, or, in the words of St. Paul, "born of a woman, born under the law"; with others on her virginity as essential, in the nature of the case, to the incarnation. This divergence dates back to the second century.

HE DESCENDED INTO HELL (*Descendit ad inferna* or *ad inferos*)

This phrase was not introduced into the Roman Creed (Apostles') until the middle of the eighth

century, but it had gained currency in the ancient church from an early period. It was in the Creed of Acquileja from the fourth century, and is interpreted by Rufinus as meaning a descent into the place of punishment. On this point there was no difference of opinion in the ancient church — Christ had descended into hell, for the purpose of meeting and overcoming Satan, and also of delivering the souls of those who trusted in Him. This was the prevailing interpretation still in the sixteenth century, both before and after the reign of Henry VIII.

> "He descended immediately in his soul down into hell . . . and at his said entry into hell first he conquered and oppressed both the devil and hell and also death itself. . . . The devil with all his power, craft and subtilty and malice is now subdued and made captive, not only unto me but unto all the other faithful people.
>
> "He spoiled hell and delivered and brought with him from thence all the souls of those righteous and good men which from the fall of Adam died in the favor of God," etc. ("The Institution of a Christian Man," 1537, p. 41, Oxford ed., 1856.)

In the "Catechism of Faith," by Thomas Becon, who was prebendary of Canterbury and chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer, in the reign of Edward VI, is a similar statement, given in answer to the question, — "What profit have we by Christ's descension and going down into hell?"

> "By this means we are well assured that Christ hath overcome the devil, broken the serpent's head, destroyed the gates of hell, vanquished the infernal army, and utterly delivered us from everlasting damnation." ("Works," Parker Soc. ed., p. 93.)

To the same conclusion, though with some apparent reluctance, came Bishop Pearson, who criticises, however, and rejects patristic interpretation, such as that of St. Jerome, St. Athanasius, and others, who taught the triumph of Christ over Satan and His spoiling of hell—a teaching, in Pearson's view, not confirmed by Scripture. But the descent into hell he seems to admit as the true interpretation: —

> "He passed to those habitations where Satan had taken up his possession and exerciseth his dominion. . . . And being

he died in the similitude of a sinner, his soul went to the place where are the souls of men who died for their sins and so did wholly undergo the law of death." ("Exposition of the Creed," Oxford ed., pp. 449, 450.)

Pearson broke the long uniform catena of opinion in regard to the descent into hell. It was no longer part of the triumphal march of the victorious Christ in the supernatural sphere, which had included the under world, with its victory over Satan and hell, as well as the upper world of light and glory, and the session at the right hand of the Father. The way was thus prepared for other modifications of that imposing process which the original structure of the Creed involved; for these later changes, Pearson's innovation was a precedent and justification. When the American Prayer Book was put forth in 1789, permission was given to omit the words, "He descended into hell," or to substitute for them the words, "He went into the place of departed spirits."

"And any churches may omit the words, 'He descended into hell,' or may instead of them use the words, 'He went into the

place of departed spirits,' which are considered as words of the same meaning in the Creeds." (Rubric of American Prayer Book, 1789.)

The popular interpretation now placed on the phrase, "He descended into hell," is that Christ went to Paradise, in accordance with His words to the thief on the cross, — "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." [1]

THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD

Opinion has been divided in regard to the nature of the resurrection, as it is approached, on the one hand, from the physical point of view; according to which matter in its essence is so endowed with potency that it may be considered capable of spiritual transformation; or, on the other hand, from a spiritual point of view, when it becomes the adaptation of spirit to the requirements of the material senses of touch and vision. Either a material body spiritualized or a spiritual body materialized.

[1] Cf. E. H. Plumtre, "The Spirits in Prison and other Studies of the Life after Death," for a discussion of this clause, "He descended into hell."

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN

The literal sense would imply that He went upwards before the eyes of His disciples, taking with him His body, — flesh and bones. But the Copernican theory has made it evident that there is no up or down in space. It is only a way of speaking.

Hence the spiritual interpretation that the ascension is the final transition from the sphere of the visible and tangible into the realm of invisible and spiritual activity.[1]

AND SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER

Again there are two interpretations. If God is conceived as outside the world and located in space, the session of Christ is construed literally as at the right hand of anthropomorphic Deity. This view has been amply illustrated in ecclesiastical art.

The spiritual view, which regards Deity as

[1] In the larger Catechism of the Eastern Church this explanation of the statement, "He came down from heaven," is offered: "It is true that He is everywhere; and so He is always in heaven and always on earth; but on earth, he was before invisible; afterwards He appeared in the flesh. In this sense it is said that He *came down from heaven.*"

immanent, implies that the right hand of God is a symbol of His omnipresence and omnipotence, and that Christ is everywhere, in the midst of the conflict against evil, and His session at the right hand of the Father becomes the symbol of victory.

FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

Either He shall return in human form at the end of the world, when the judgment, conceived as a future event, shall begin; or, He comes perpetually in every event or movement which furthers the growth of His Kingdom, and the judgment is continuous and culminating — the discrimination between good and evil and the condemnation of the evil. (This latter view is urged in Robertson's Sermons, in the writings of F. D. Maurice, and eloquently presented in Mulford's "Republic of God.")

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

On this point the Anglican Church has offered an interpretation in the "Prayer for all sorts and conditions of men," where "all those who profess and call themselves Christians" is given as

its equivalent. In the American version of this prayer "Universal" is substituted for Catholic, and this reading may be carried into the Creed — "the holy *universal* Church." In the Bidding Prayer of the Church of England (Canons of 1604, Canon 55) it reads, "Christ's holy Catholic Church, that is, the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the world."

On the other hand, especially since the Oxford Movement (1833), there has been received another interpretation, — the Catholic Church exists in three branches, Greek, Roman, and Anglican; an interpretation which excludes the Lutheran Church and the various branches of the Reformed Church; in a word, the Protestant world is shut out from the Catholic Church of the creeds.[1]

[1] The Greek Church practically identifies "Catholic" with "Orthodox," and gives the preference to *Orthodox* in its title. Among the definitions of "Catholic" the most prominent is in the Edict of Theodosius (380 A.D.), where those alone are to enjoy the privilege of being known as "Catholic" who accept the Nicene Creed. According to Vincentius of Lerins, that is *Catholic* which has been always, everywhere, and by all received: *Quod semper, quod ubique, et quod ab omnibus.* The Roman Church has steadfastly maintained that union with the bishop of Rome is necessary in order to union with the Catholic Church, or that papacy is essential to Catholicity.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Was not in the original form of the Creed, but was added in Southern Gaul in the fifth century, and became a part of the Roman Creed after its final shape was assumed in the eighth century. There has never been certainty about the meaning of the phrase. It has often been interpreted as in apposition to the preceding phrase and as thus defining the Catholic Church to be the communion of saints or of holy persons. This was the view of Niceta in a homily attributed to him, where the Church as the communion of saints includes the living and the dead: "What is the Church but the congregation of all saints? Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, all the just who have been, are, or shall be, are one Church, because sanctified by one faith and life, marked by One Spirit, they constitute one body. Believe then that in this one Church you will attain the communion of saints." [1]

Others have interpreted the clause as designed to exclude heretics, with whom there should be no communion — a view which finds

[1] Cf. Caspari, "Anedota 1," p. 355, cited in Swete, "The Apostles' Creed," p. 84. A similar view is found in Sermon 241, attributed to Augustine and published in appendix to his works.

support in ancient comments.[1] Again it has been maintained that the purpose of its insertion in the Creed was to sanction the worship of saints, which in the fourth century was opposed by Vigilantius and his followers, but became the later custom of the Church, — a view maintained by Harnack in his short treatise on the Creed.[2] Still another interpretation, and quite as probable as any, refers it to an anti-Donatist purpose, — a disclaimer against the Donatist accusation that the Catholic Church embraced alike the evil and the good, whereas the Church should be the body of the pure.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Would seem to stand forth distinctly as a supreme principle of the Christian faith were it not for inevitable inferences which either illumine or darken its meaning: —

1. That the forgiveness comes directly to the

[1] Cf. John of Damascus, "De Fide Orthodoxa," 13; where in speaking of the Eucharist, he warns against communion with heretics. In the "Catechism of the Council of Trent," Ch. 9, Quest. 22, "Communion of Saints" is regarded as explanatory of the Catholic Church and as implying communion in the Eucharist from which heretics are excluded. There was an effort to restore this meaning to the phrase in the Anglican Church in the last century.

[2] "Das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntniss," p. 33.

soul from God, on condition of faith and repentance, without the interposition of any human media; and with the forgiveness comes the sense of assurance that sins are forgiven;

2. The forgiveness can only be obtained through the Sacraments, and by the mediation of the priesthood; and even so, the absolute assurance of forgiveness cannot be imparted in this life.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

The resurrection of the *flesh* (*resurrectionem carnis*) was the original meaning; and from the second century down to this modern day it was the prevailing view that the particles of the body laid in the grave would constitute the body which should rise again. Tertullian and Augustine, among many others, met the scoffers of their time who could not believe such teaching, with what must then have appeared conclusive argument.

This meaning now seems by almost common consent to have been abandoned, and for it is substituted a meaning more in accord with scientific teaching, — that "resurrection of the body" implies a spiritual body different from the body laid in the grave and not composed of the same particles, — an interpretation defended

by appealing to the Pauline teaching in 1 Cor. 15.

THE LIFE EVERLASTING

Is a statement about which there would be little difference of opinion were it not that it involves the question of everlasting punishment, and the issue at once is made whether this latter doctrine is part of the teaching of the Creed.

In his "Exposition of the Creed" it is noteworthy that Pearson comments at length on the resurrection to endless condemnation as no less implied in the phrase "everlasting life," than the resurrection to endless happiness.

On the other hand, according to the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (1864): —

> "The hope that the punishment of the wicked may not endure to all eternity is certainly not at variance with anything that is found in the Apostles' Creed." [1]

[1] Cf. "Six Judgments of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council," p. 101, London, 1872. No opinion is here expressed as to the authority of the Privy Council; but as bearing witness to the variety of interpretations of the Creed its judgment has quite as much significance as the opinion of Bishop Pearson, in the seventeenth century. Among those who acted as judges in this case were the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Longley), the Archbishop of York (Dr. Thomson), the Bishop of London (Dr. Tait).

It is well known that in the original Forty-two Articles from which our "Thirty-nine Articles" were derived, there was one article, the Forty-second, which implied the endless punishment of the wicked. The rejection of this article is not without significance for the interpretation of this phrase in the Creed.

CHAPTER III

THE VOWS OF THE CLERGY AND CLERICAL HONESTY

I

In considering the vows of the clergy at their ordination, the question arises whether the Reformers took any steps to prevent a reversion to that traditional interpretation of the faith which they discarded; or whether they provided for the growth of the Church into ever higher and fuller knowledge of Christian truth. The study of the Ordinal shows that they had no solicitude for the creeds, that they were chiefly concerned with maintaining the supremacy of Scripture, in the study of which lay the safeguards against the erroneous and strange doctrines they sought to banish.

It must be borne in mind that the Anglican Church has provided no authoritative commentary on the Creed specifying what interpretation shall be given of its separate clauses, with the exception of the important authoritative state-

ment in the Church Catechism, as to what is to be "chiefly learned" from the Creed; or, in other words, that its supreme object is to set forth the name of God, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

"First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world.

"Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind.

"Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the people of God."

The inference seems just and inevitable that if any one learns this much from the Creed, he has gained what the Church holds to be essential; the other details of the Creed are left to his individual judgment, guided by Scripture, to determine. As a matter of fact, this has been the usage since the Reformation and so continues to this day. Everywhere a variety of belief has existed on these subordinate details.

This absence of any authoritative commentary on the Creed, explaining in elaborate fashion and demonstrating the meaning of every and all its separate statements, gains the greater significance, when we compare the attitude of the Anglican Church, in its one brief statement, as to what we are chiefly to learn from the Creed, with

the expansive, voluminous, and definite expositions of other churches — the "Catechism of the Council of Trent," the "Longer Catechism of the Eastern Church" — or the elaborate Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

It was from these very things that the Anglican Church in an impressive hour of the world's history was seeking to escape. The moment was a brief one, but it sufficed for the work to be done, — to reduce Christianity to its simplest terms, as it was known in the apostolic age or in the generation that folllowed. It was no haphazard work they were doing. To this result the longing aspirations of men for centuries had been turning. The best, most spiritual men for more than two centuries had seen this as their goal. In the Providence of God, it was accomplished in the Church of England.

But already the ecclesiastical reaction had begun, and what was to be done must be done quickly. Already the reactionary influence had invaded England, and under the fear that religion and the Church were in danger, expositions of the Apostles' Creed had been set forth in the latter years of Henry VIII, which imposed on it definite and binding interpretation, involving at every point the mediæval or traditional sense of the faith. Let any one read the two treatises,

"The Institution of a Christian Man, containing the exposition or interpretation of the Common Creed," etc. (1537), or "A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man" (1543), and then turn to the Book of Common Prayer, and he will need no other commentary on the purpose of the reformers in the matter of the Apostles' Creed. The "Freedom" of the Christian man was their aim, not his "Institution" or "Erudition." It was the ancient aspiration — *Libera sit ecclesia Anglicana*, that was at last to be fulfilled.

It is a misapprehension of the Anglican Church, including our own, which has somehow come to be widely prevalent, that she enforces upon her clergy, however it may be with the laity, an oath to receive the Apostles' Creed and to believe it and recite it with some authoritative sense attached to each phrase, under penalty of incurring the stigma of dishonesty and perjury. And the burden has grown the heavier because a school in the Church, dating from the last century, insists that the Creed shall be taken in what is now called its "Catholic" sense. And it has come about that those who should rejoice in the Church in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free are sensitive and uncertain, and even doubt whether they are truly called

according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, to serve in the sacred ministry of His Church.

In the literature of the Church of England, there is a book rarely if ever referred to, an almost forgotten book, known as the "Homilies." It is the only book ever set forth by authority, of which it is said in the Thirty-fifth of the Articles of Religion that it "doth contain a godly and wholesome doctrine and *necessary for these times;*" and to this statement the American Episcopal Church has added that it is "an explication of Christian doctrine, and instructive in piety and morals." It is referred to here, because, in its origin, it is contemporary with the Prayer Book — those who drew up the Ordinal and the Articles being among its compilers. To understand the vows which the clergy assume at ordination, it is indispensable. It is, however, chiefly a book for the laity — instructing them as to the doctrine of this Church, with special insistence on the source from which the doctrine is derived.

It is characteristic of the book of the Homilies that it nowhere recommends ecclesiastical tradition as an authority in this Church; it contains no exposition of the Creed. It has discourses on the Nativity, on the Passion, and Resurrection of our Lord. The first of these

is noticeable for the absence of any effort to urge the Mediæval conception of the Incarnation, which had become the source of confusion and weakness. The virgin birth is assumed, but no dogmatic importance is attached to it, and Mary is not alluded to as "ever Virgin and Mother of God." There is no dwelling upon the Gospel of the Infancy, but rather on the character and work and teaching of the mature Christ, Son of God and Son also of Man; and if there is any insistence it is on His perfect humanity, which in the preceding ages had been obscured and practically lost.

There is much in the Homilies that in tone is antiquated, but its spirit is fresh and strong as in the day of its birth. Its keynote is the importance of "the reading and knowledge of Holy Scripture" and not familiarity with Church traditions. If men are in doubt, whether clergy or laity, it is to Scripture they must turn for relief. It is assumed that the laity are capable by this method for themselves to reach the truth. There is not one source for the clergy and another for the people, but Scripture is imposed on both alike. The laity are not urged to turn to the clergy for light and satisfaction in the resolution of difficulties, but to go for themselves to the Word of God. The book

opens with words like these addressed to the people in the congregation: —

"Unto a Christian man there can be nothing either more necessary or profitable than the knowledge of holy Scripture, forasmuch as in it is contained God's true word, setting forth his glory and also man's duty. And there is no truth nor doctrine necessary for our justification and everlasting salvation but that is or may be drawn out of that fountain and well of truth. Therefore as many as be desirous to enter into the right and perfect way unto God, must apply their minds to know holy Scripture; without the which, they can neither sufficiently know God and his will, neither their office and duty. And as drink is pleasant to them that be dry and meat to them that be hungry, so is the reading, hearing, searching of holy Scripture to them that be desirous to know God, or themselves, and to do his will. . . . Let us reverently study and read holy Scriptures, which is the food of the soul. Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the Old and New Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men's traditions, devised by men's

> imaginations for our justification and salvation. For in Holy Scripture is fully contained what we ought to do, and what to eschew, what to believe, what to love, and what to look for at God's hand at length. In these books we shall find the Father from whom, the Son by whom, and the Holy Ghost in whom all things have their being and keeping up; and these three persons to be but one God and one substance." [1]

The object of the reformers as achieved in the Book of Common Prayer was to get away from the commandments of men, which had been substituted for Christ's commandment, to get back again to Christ, and to His will, to banish and drive away from the Church "the manifold enormities" and "the ungodly doctrine" which had crept into the existing Church "unto the utter destruction of innumerable souls, if God's mercy were not."

The articles of the faith were given a prominent place. The Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments were to be read openly unto the people, that "they may learn how to invocate and call upon the name of God, and

[1] "The First Homily," pp. 1, 2.

know what duty they owe to God and man, so that they may pray, believe, and work according to knowledge." But first and foremost and above all was "the Word of God, which is the only food of the soul, and that most excellent light that we must walk by in this our most dangerous pilgrimage;" and it is at all times to be preached to the people, as a means of learning their duty and to avoid "the false doctrine which has crept into the Church of God."

> "Calling to remembrance that the next and most ready way to expel and avoid as well all corrupt, vicious, and ungodly living, as also erroneous doctrine tending toward superstition and idolatry; and clearly to put away all contention, which hath heretofore risen through diversity of preaching, is the true setting forth and pure declaring of God's Word." [1]
>
> "God grant all us . . . to feed of the sweet and savoury bread of God's own Word, and (*as Christ commanded*) to eschew all our pharisaical and papistical leaven of man's feigned religion; which although it were before God most abominable and contrary to God's commandments and Christ's pure

[1] Preface to the "Homilies," 1547.

> religion, yet it was praised to be a most godly life and highest state of perfection; as though a man might be more godly and more perfect, by keeping the rules, traditions, and professions of men than by keeping the holy commandments of God."[1]

In recent years, with the revival of the "Catholic tradition" within the Church, an undue importance has been assigned to the creeds. There are many upon whose conscience and intellect the details of the creeds do not press heavily. They are aware in reciting them that part of their content makes no appeal to their spiritual nature. They take them in a large and general, undogmatic way, as a whole, rather than part by part. They have imbibed the teaching of the Church Catechism that the creeds present God's fatherhood, Christ's leadership by which he delivers humanity, and the inward presence of a Holy Spirit with His sanctifying influence. They would fain escape from the suggestion of controversy which the creeds carry as an atmosphere, into the undogmatic, the purer air of Holy Scripture, before the baleful controversies began. They are aware that interpre-

[1] "Third part of the Sermon of Good Works," in "Homilies," p. 52, Am. ed., Philadelphia, 1844.

tations and inferences connected by tradition with the creeds are alien to their higher spiritual instincts and tend to lessen the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free.

Such as these, and they are many, are closer to the purpose of our formularies than those who seek to rivet the chains of the "Catholic sense" upon the freer spirit of Anglican piety; they hear with a curious surprise that if they do not take each separate phrase in a fixed meaning, as the "Catholic sense" has determined, that they are recreant to their vows, perjurers, dishonest, eating the Church's bread while denying its faith. But they have not so learned the Anglican Church. Nor were they aware that such dangers lay in their path, when as children, being now come to the years of discretion, they professed the Christian faith at Confirmation.

In their unconscious infancy the question was asked of their sponsors in baptism, "Dost thou believe all the articles of the Christian faith as they are contained in the Apostles' Creed?" And at Confirmation they were called upon to "renew the solemn vow and promise made in their name at baptism, ratifying and confirming the same, and acknowledging themselves bound to believe and to do all those things which their sponsors then undertook for them."

The preliminary to Confirmation was a knowledge of the Church Catechism, where the Creed was reduced to its essential contents,—the Divine name in its threefoldness, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, with the distinctive work of each. For the rest, the Church Catechism had laid strong emphasis on the moral duties of life and on the elements of Christian character. Nowhere does the purpose of the Reformers appear more clearly than in the two concluding exhortations of the Baptismal office, where it is not the Creed that is made prominent, but Christian character; and baptism is set forth as representing unto us our profession — to follow the example of our Saviour Christ and be made like unto Him. At Confirmation the Creed was not recited,[1] but at that solemn moment the mind was centred on the resolution by God's grace "obediently to keep God's holy will and commandment and walk in the same all the days of their life."

But if this constitutes subscription to the Creed, it is binding upon the laity; and upon the clergy, so far as they share with the laity a common obligation. For at their ordination, the clergy,

[1] In the American Prayer Book the Apostles' Creed is not recited at baptism; in the English book is is given in full, in the interrogative form.

as has been said earlier, do not profess the Creed as part of their ordination vow. What could the Anglican Church have meant when she deliberately rejected from the reformed Ordinal that most sensitive act of the Roman Ordinal, where the candidate for the priesthood solemnly, in the presence of the bishop and before the altar, repeats the Apostles' Creed as his profession of faith, the condition as it were of his admission to holy orders? When acts like this are omitted does it mean that the mind of the Church is to enforce them more rigidly by its silence and by abstention from all allusion? When a bishop is consecrated according to the Roman, or unreformed, Ordinal, all the emphasis and impressiveness of the rite is concentrated on his examination in the Nicene Creed, which is applied interrogatively with a searching rigidity. That, too, the Anglican Church omitted from the office of making a bishop.

It would, indeed, have been most strange and inconsistent, if the authors of our formularies, having provided no explicit exposition of the creeds, beyond the simple comment in the Church Catechism, should have demanded such subscription, and such an oath of obedience from the candidates for her ministry. There is a deeper meaning here and a profounder purpose

in the Anglican Church, a more thoroughgoing reformation, than we have dared allow ourselves to believe was possible. It has been covered up and glossed over, but it remains a potent influence within the Church which cannot be overcome.

The method would have been a most simple and feasible one had it been the aim of the Ordinal to secure a cast-iron oath of subscription to the Creed on the part of the clergy, which no subtlety of interpretation could have evaded. Such a result is attained in the Roman Church. It was just this result which the Anglican reformers apparently sought to avoid. A new light had dawned on them by the study of God's Word, and in that light they saw that the full conception of Christ and His work could never be obtained by formal subscription to a creed. A new conception of the Incarnation and its meaning to the world had been gained. The Church had reached its maturity. The Gospel of the Infancy which satisfied the Middle Ages was no longer adequate, with the revelation of Christ in the open book confronting them. They were departing from that view of the Incarnation which had prevailed from the fifth century, and which justified itself by inferences from the creeds, till by long association it had become

identified with them. They were under no delusion regarding the value of the Creed when compared with the Scripture. Their emphasis was withdrawn from creeds and placed on Scripture, to which the candidate for the ministry of this Church was called to give his entire and unreserved allegiance.

What vows then has the Anglican Church substituted for the subscription to the Creeds which was the fundamental vow of the Ordinal before the Reformation?

"Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain all doctrine required as necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? And are you determined out of said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge: and to teach nothing as necessary to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?

"Will you *then* give your faithful diligence so to minister the *Doctrine and the Sacraments and the Discipline of Christ* as the *Lord hath commanded* and as this Church hath received the same, *according to the commandments of God?*

"Will you be ready with all faithful dili-

gence to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word? . . .

"Will you be diligent in prayers and in reading Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same?" [1]

No one of these vows was in the Ordinal before the Reformation. They must be taken together. In reality they form but one vow, whose purpose is to elevate Scripture above tradition and by so doing to make the Church of England free.

It has somehow come to be taken for granted by many that there is a conflict here, — that the first vow which calls for private or individual judgment and persuasion as to the teaching of Scripture is one horn of a dilemma, and that the other horn on which we are in danger of being impaled is "the doctrine as this Church hath received the same"; and that if there is any reconciliation possible of this contradiction, it

[1] In the Ordering of Deacons is contained the question, "Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?" Here the purpose is clear not to exclude from the Bible, as "the Word of God, containing all things necessary to salvation," any of the books recognized in the Articles (Art. VI) as canonical. Equally clear is the purpose which shuts out the Apocryphal books from the Canon.

must be attained by subordinating one's conclusions about truth drawn from the Scripture to "the doctrine as this Church hath received the same." And those who rest upon this second vow as the more important keep a vigilant eye upon those who think their primal duty is to preach from the depth of their inward conviction.

But there is no conflict between the vows. They have the same common aim. It is a superficial and unhistorical view, and does grave injustice to the authors of the Ordinal, to think that they could hamper the clergy by such a dilemma or entangle them on such a snag. The moment was too critical, the danger too great; the fortunes of the realm and of the Reformed Church of England were at stake when the Ordinal was put forth. There is deep sincerity and painstaking unity of purpose in the various forms of what really is but one vow of the clergy in the reformed Ordinal. To minister the doctrine *as this Church hath received the same*, does not mean as it hath received it from tradition, thus identifying the Reformed Church with the Church of the past; but the doctrine as set forth in the Articles of Religion, whose object at every turn is to protest against the errors involved in the commandments of men, which Rome had added to the Christian faith, —

its gross anthropomorphism, its inadequate conception of the Incarnation, its elevation of tradition to an equality with Scripture, its neglect of the study of Scripture, its perversion of the Lord's Supper into a sacrificial mass, its irrational and unscriptural doctrine of transubstantiation, its mutilated administration of the holy communion, its injury done to the discipline of Christ by the practice of compulsory confession, and by monastic vows of celibacy. To guard against these things is one object in requiring of the clergy that they shall minister *the doctrine as this Church hath received the same.*

The purport of this vow becomes clearer, if all the phraseology, which accompanies it, is taken into consideration. A closer study shows where the emphasis lies. It is the "doctrine (of Christ) and sacraments (of Christ) and discipline of Christ, *as the Lord hath commanded* and as this Church hath received the same *according to the commandments of God.*"

A good commentary on these words may be found by turning again to that contemporaneous treatise, "The Homilies," which has much to say about the *commandments of God* as over against the commandments of the Church or of men. Speaking of the previous age and of the ecclesiastical conditions from which the

Reformation was liberating men, the homily "Of good works" remarks: —

> "Such hath been the corrupt inclination of man, ever superstitiously given to make new honouring of God of his own head, and then to have more affection and devotion to keep that than to search out God's holy commandments and to keep them. And furthermore, to take God's commandments for men's commandments, and men's commandments for God's commandments, yea, and for the highest and most perfect and holy of all God's commandments. *And so was all confused, that scant well learned men, and but a small number of them knew, or at the least would know, and durst affirm the truth, to separate or sever God's commandments from the commandments of men. Wherefore did grow much error, superstition, idolatry, vain religion, overthwart (preposterous) judgment, great contention with all ungodly living.*" ("The Homilies," p. 53.)

Passages of this kind abound in "The Homilies." Another may be cited: —

> "Nowhere can we more certainly search for the knowledge of this will of God but in

> the Holy Scriptures, for they be they that testify of him, saith our Saviour Christ. . . . We see what vanity the school-doctrine is mixed with, for that in this Word they sought not the will of God, but rather the will of reason, the trade of custom, *the path of the fathers, the practice of the Church:* let us therefore read and revolve the Holy Scriptures both day and night, for blessed is he who hath his whole meditation therein." ("Homilies," p. 435.)

The phrases, then, so often omitted, when reference is made to the vow of the clergy, are of supreme importance to its correct interpretation. It is not merely the "doctrine as this Church hath received the same" but "*the doctrine of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded*, and as this Church hath received the same *according to the commandments of God.*" If this qualification be kept in view there is no conflict, but entire harmony with the preceeding vow, "to teach nothing but what you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture."

The connection between the vows, which identifies them as having one common end and meaning, is further evidenced by the word "*then;*" "will you *then*," or will you *therefore*,

seeing that you have already grasped the essential truth, that all doctrine must come from the teaching of Christ contained in Scripture, with an inward persuasion of its truth — will you *then* minister the doctrine of Christ, as Christ hath commanded, and as this Church hath received it from Him, and proclaims it, holding it according to God's commandments, and not from tradition, or the commandments of men. And lest there should be a danger of falling into conventional ways and stereotyped opinions, as to what Scripture teaches, another vow is exacted calling for its continual study, as the life work of the ministry. No allusion is here to the study of tradition or to decisions of synods, however imposing, or to the voice of the fathers in ancient times; but "will you be diligent * * * in reading the Holy Scriptures and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same?" One must turn to the Greek and Roman Ordinals to measure the significance of this impressive vow by the contrast they offer. In the Greek office is a special question to the candidate for episcopal consecration, — which is answered at very great length, — "Explain how thou holdest the Canons of the Holy Apostles and the Holy Fathers." And indeed in both Greek and Latin Ordinals, the bishop

elect (of the presbyter, little account is taken) seems to be called upon mainly to fight over again the theological issues of the ancient Church in the fourth and fifth centuries.

There is then no evidence to be drawn, from the vows which the clergy assume in ordination, that the Creed was, as in some feeling of emergency, an object of solicitude, or that it was regarded as binding upon the clergy and not equally binding on the laity. The vow of the clergy to maintain the doctrine of Christ as this Church hath received it sends them back to Christ, — as the Lord hath commanded, — in order to learn the doctrine received by the Church according to the commandments of God and not according to the traditions of men.

Further evidence for the truth of this position is seen in the circumstance that from the Reformation down to our own day the oath of subscription in the Church of England has been taken to the Thirty-nine Articles and not to creeds as such. Incumbents of parishes and students admitted to the universities were required to make this subscription. Of the Creeds it is said in the VIIIth Article that they ought "thoroughly to be received and believed," but the reason added is significant, "because they may be proved by most certain warrant of Holy

Scripture. Testing the creeds by Scripture may lead to a larger and truer interpretation of their meaning than when they are interpreted by tradition dating from the fifth century and received on the authority of such tradition. The VIIIth Article is further qualified by the comment on the primary intent of the Creed as given in the Church Catechism. Another qualification will be noted in the following chapter.

In reference to the subject of subscription any allusion to it would be incomplete without mention of the present "relaxed" form of subcription, which in the English Church has been substituted for the earlier more stringent form. For two centuries, or since 1662, the form was, "I hereby declare my unfeigned assent and *consent* to all and everything prescribed in and by the Book of Common Prayer."[1] In 1865 the

[1] According to the Canons of the Church of England, 1604, it reads (Canon xxxvi): "No one shall hereafter be received into the ministry, . . . or admitted to any ecclesiastical living, nor suffered to preach, etc., unless he shall subscribe to these three articles following: —

"1. (As this article relates to the King's supremacy it is sufficient only to allude to it here.)

"2. That the Book of Common Prayer and of ordering bishops, priests, and deacons, containeth in it nothing contrary to the Word of God, and that it may be lawfully so used; and that he himself will use the form in the said book prescribed, in public prayer, and administration of the Sacraments, and none other.

form was changed to read, "I assent to the Thirty-nine Articles and to the Book of Common Prayer." The first of these forms of subscription dates from 1662, when the object of the Act of Uniformity was to eject Nonconformists from the Church. After any danger in this direction had ceased, there began an agitation, continued through the eighteenth century, for a more relaxed and general form of subscription. In the American Episcopal Church, which inherited a strong tendency toward relaxation at the time when the Prayer Book was put forth in 1789, the relaxed form of subscription reads, "I do solemnly engage to *conform* to the doctrines and worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States." This form of subscription was regarded as a great advantage gained over the English form. In the present form of the English subscription oath, the dropping of *consent*, and retaining only *assent*, points

"3. That he alloweth the Book of Articles of Religion, agreed upon by the archbishops and bishops of both provinces and the whole clergy, in the year of our Lord God 1562; and that he acknowledgeth all and every the articles therein contained . . . to be agreeable to the word of God.

"To these three articles whoever will subscribe, he shall for the avoiding of ambiguities subscribe in this order and form of words, setting down both his Christian and surname: I, N. N., do willingly and *ex animo* subscribe to these three articles above mentioned, and to all things contained in them."

strongly in the direction of relaxation, and of relief for "troubled consciences." But Maurice may have been right when he maintained in 1834 that subscription to the Articles was a "defence of liberty." And in 1852, although he had in some respects changed his mind in regard to their subscription, he could still write, "I am more convinced than ever that the Articles are more comprehensive (being also *less* loose and capricious) than the dogmas of our different parties, and that we should be far more at the mercy of the most intolerant private judgments and public opinion if we lost them." [1] These words sound like a prophecy of what would be attempted in our own generation. But it must be admitted and maintained if possible, that when the Church after long deliberation "relaxes" the form of subscription, it does not intend that advantage shall be taken of the relaxation to make the oath more stringent and inclusive than before, or that any party in the Church shall be thereby enabled to fasten on the clergy its own rigid conception of what the subscription oath involves.

It is not wise, and certainly it is not the spirit of Christian charity, to fling the accusation of dis-

[1] "Life of Maurice," vol. i, p. 168, and vol. ii, p. 154.

honesty against the clergy. And if it is brought against the clergy, it must be laid with equal justice against the laity. The Anglican Church makes no discrimination between them in the matter of reciting or professing the Creed.

But surely the appeal, when the interpretation of the Creed is at issue, should not be carried to the man on the street. Commercial tests are not the standard for judging religious convictions or deciding on their accordance with theological formularies. It is rather to human documents that we must go, if we would make comparison, such as written constitutions of the State, capable of diverse and even interpretations absolutely contradicting each other; or to legal formulas or statutes which have been stretched to cover cases never originally contemplated. Human preference and usage in these departments of life has shown itself reluctant to make new constitutions or new statutes when the old can be so construed as to include the new experience. In this way jurisprudence has grown. For it seems to shake the sanctions of law, if it should appear that the old statutes did not cover the whole range of human interests. This has been called "legal fiction," but it represents a process by which law has been developed. In his "Ancient Law," Sir Henry Maine has

made some important remarks, which are not without their bearing on the history of creeds.

"*Legal fiction* signifies any assumption, which conceals or affects to conceal, the fact that a rule of law has undergone alteration, its letter remaining unchanged, its operation being modified. . . . The law has been wholly changed; the 'fiction' is that it remains what it always was. . . . Fictions in all their forms are particularly congenial to the infancy of society. They satisfy the desire for improvement, which is not quite wanting, at the same time that they do not offend the superstitious disrelish for change which is always present. At a particular stage of social progress, they are invaluable expedients for overcoming the rigidity of law. . . . To revile them as merely fraudulent is to betray ignorance of their peculiar office in the historical development of law. . . . There are several fictions still exercising a powerful influence on English jurisprudence, which could not be discarded without a severe shock to the ideas, and considerable change in the language of English practitioners. . . . Nothing is more distasteful to men, either

as individuals or as masses, than the admission of their moral progress as a substantive reality. This unwillingness shows itself, as regards individuals, in the exaggerated respect which is ordinarily paid to the doubtful virtue of consistency. The movement of the collective opinion of a whole society is too palpable to be ignored and is generally too visibly for the better to be decried; but there is the greatest disinclination to accept it as a primary phenomenon, and it is commonly explained as the recovery of a lost perfection — the gradual return to a state from which the race had lapsed. This tendency to look backward instead of forward produced anciently, as we have seen, on Roman jurisprudence effects the most serious and permanent." (Pp. 26, 32, 33, 67.)

If the same distinction be carried into the sphere of theology, then there would be theological "fictions," such as maintaining that the Creeds are immutable in their meaning, while in such clauses as the "descent into hell," or the "Catholic Church," or the "resurrection of the flesh," not to mention others, their meaning has been revolutionized. But to stigmatize this

process as dishonest would involve bringing an indictment against the whole process of religious development.

The opinion, then, of the man on the street has but little value on the question of the interpretation of the Creeds. The subject is too subtle, too complicated; it involves also the possibility of real meanings, and apparent meanings, of unconscious modifications, under the influence of the spirit of the age, which is forever changing. To ask a Roman Catholic what his judgment would be on the inversion of meaning in the phrase, "the Holy Catholic Church," would bring an answer condemning the Anglican Church to the guilt of dishonest subterfuge and evasion. But such a verdict would have little significance, although to his mind it would be a question of simple honesty—professing to believe in the Holy Catholic Church when the historic sense of the phrase had been abandoned.

There is no universally recognized court of appeal in organized Christianity to which these questions can be submitted, in the confidence of an intelligent, impartial, and satisfactory judgment. And certainly, least of all, can the judgment of those have any value, who, having discarded creeds, insist that honesty in others who retain them calls for rigid adherence to their

face meaning and in the most literal fashion, regardless of the variety of interpretation which history has sanctioned. The object of those who seek in this way to impugn the honesty of the clergy is clear enough; they are performing a double duty, not only advocating honesty and sincerity in general, but making it so disagreeable a task where creeds are concerned as to lead to the abandonment of creeds altogether. Which of these two motives predominates, it is not necessary here to determine. But any one who looks a little closely into the matter may be excused for thinking that this unattainable ethical standard for creed subscription, urged by those who have rejected creeds, involves a primary purpose in controversial theology, or sectarian rivalry.

There are other illustrations in history which show that the accusation of dishonesty against the clergy must be taken at least with some qualifications. In the ecclesiastical as in the political sphere, it may be possible that the use of such strong terms, as dishonesty, perjury, treachery, too often repeated, and against persons of otherwise upright character, will lose their force and come to have a merely partisan meaning. Thus the charge of breaking the solemn vows of consecration to the epis-

copate was brought against Archbishop Cranmer and other English bishops — to say nothing of the large number of English clergy — and against professed monks in the Reformation who broke their monastic vows. The mind of Catholic Europe was aghast at Martin Luther, who threw his ordination and monastic vows to the winds, as having no obligation whatever on a free Christian man who had rediscovered the true Gospel of Christ. Another illustration may be cited as bearing on the question of clerical honesty in more recent times.

In the Autobiography of Isaac Williams, who was a friend of the late Cardinal Newman, is this statement (p. 125): "Newman said to Copeland, 'Could you sign the Thirty-nine Articles? I could not.'" But this was in Newman's Anglican days, and he had already made his subscription to the Articles. His mind was undergoing a change, he had really repudiated the Articles, but he did not propose in consequence to leave the Church of England. His thought was moving Romewards, some of his disciples had already left the Church of England for Rome and others were preparing to follow. The Thirty-nine Articles, taken in the sense of their compilers, made it impossible for them to remain. Then Newman was moved

to assault the citadel of Anglican liberty, not from without but from within. He wrote a treatise, the famous Tract XC, in which he aimed to show that the Articles had been so loosely or inadvertently drawn that they might be grammatically construed into a sense opposite to their original purport. By the aid of his unrivalled dialectic, he traversed the Articles and reversed their meaning, till it almost seemed as if the object of the Protestant reformers had been to reunite the Anglican Church with the Church of Rome. The Thirty-nine Articles were made to seem patient of an interpretation which harmonized them with the definitions of the Council of Trent. It is a familiar story — the consternation into which England was thrown, which finds its only parallel in the ancient church, in the time of the Arian controversy. From that moment Newman's days in the Anglican Church were numbered. But nothing that he ever wrote or confessed showed that the attempt to undo the Thirty-nine Articles rested upon his conscience. His devoted friend and admirer, Dr. Pusey, who refused to follow him, defended the effort to "reinterpret" the Articles. On the basis of this reinterpretation, which reversed their original purport, many were enabled to remain in the Church of England who must

otherwise have left. From this time a "Catholic" sense was imposed on the formularies of the Book of Common Prayer, and apparently with a clear conscience. A new school arose who appropriated as their own the Anglican Church, making it over to suit their own convenience, till at last those who sought to stand on the foundations of the Reformation appeared as no better than traitors to God and humanity.

In questions about the interpretation of the Creed, the judgment of the "man on the street" has no value, even though it find vigorous and severe expression in the utterances of the secular press. For the "man on the street does not care a rap about dogmatic formularies and subtleties," and it is just these very things which are at issue. In the matter of religion, no amount of business training or skill in journalism or knowledge of affairs is of any avail. Religion has its own laws, it is guided by deep motives, which only those interested or, as it were, obsessed by them can understand.

Let us take an example. In Old Testament history we read how the brethren of Joseph sold him a captive to traders going down into Egypt. They acted with a definite purpose and for this very end. They were responsible for their deed. But when, years afterward, they themselves were

forced to go to Egypt because of the famine, they encountered their brother in a high official position, and they were afraid in consequence of their evil act. And Joseph said unto them, "*Now it was not you that brought me hither*, but God." What would the verdict of the "man on the street" be, when, knowing the circumstances, he was confronted with this statement? To his mind it would seem as plain as daylight that Joseph was guilty of falsehood in denying what was a simple matter of fact. But in Joseph's mind, the matter of fact had faded away into legend or myth or unreality, and only the spiritual reality behind the fact remained.

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETATION OF THE VIRGIN-BIRTH IN THE ANCIENT CHURCH

"THE truth of a Creed," said Coleridge, "must be tried by the Holy Scripture; but the sense of the Creed by the known sentiments and inferred intentions of its compilers." It is not with its truth, then, as tested by Holy Scripture, but with its sense, that we are concerned, as we come to the clause "born of the Virgin Mary." The apparent meaning may not have been the original purpose and intention. There is evidence tending to show that the primary object in alluding to the birth of Christ was to maintain the reality of His human birth, His birth of a woman whose name is given, just as in the case of His death the name of Pontius Pilate is mentioned in order to verify the fact. The Creed is chiefly concerned at this point with the assertion of the full humanity of Christ, not of His divinity. In a later age when the controversies of the second century had been forgotten, another interpretation was placed upon this

clause, which put the stress upon the Virgin-birth. But meantime great changes had passed over the Church, and in consequence of them the original sense of the Creed had been lost.

In the earliest form of the Apostles' Creed,[1] which is known among students of the creeds as the Old Roman Creed, originating in Rome, it is thought, about the middle of the second century, the clause had not yet been inserted — "conceived by the Holy Ghost." That may have been added a generation or more later. The related clauses of the Creed then ran in the earliest form: —

> "Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and buried, rose again from the dead on the third day."

Birth, death, and resurrection as actual and historic facts are thus grouped together. Here

[1] The best book of reference for the ancient creeds and rules of faith is Hahn, "Bibliothek der Symbole," 1897. As it is not intended here to make any special study of the creeds, the reader may be referred for the bibliography to Dr. McGiffert, "The Apostles' Creed," pp. 3–5. Caspari's exhaustive studies, covering many years, have been succeeded by the very important work of Kattenbusch, "Das Apostolische Symbol," Bd. i, 1894; Bd. ii, 1900. Among works from the Anglican point of view may be mentioned: Heurtley, "Harmonia Symbolica" and "De fide et Symbolo"; Swainson, "The Nicene and Apostles' Creeds"; also Schaff's "Creeds of Christendom."

may be noted the position of the early Catholic Church as compared with the preaching of the Apostolic Age, that it added the birth of Christ to His passion and resurrection, giving to it an equal place. According to the emphatic declaration of St. Paul, the "rule of faith" included only the passion and the resurrection: —

> "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again according to the Scriptures." [1]

The early apostolic preaching was chiefly concerned with the *significance* of the death of Christ. But in the old Roman Creed it is the *fact* of the death that is important, and no interpretation is offered. And to the fact of the death is added the fact of the birth of Christ, as together constituting the assertion of His actual humanity, and the reality of His earthly life. The outlook had changed for the Church when it began to take possession of the Roman Empire. The emphasis of St. Paul was no longer

[1] Cf. also 2 Tim. ii. 8, for what Zahn thinks belonged to a formula of St. Paul: "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel."

the emphasis required by the Church for the successful prosecution of its work. The Catholic Church was encountering dreams and imaginations, fantasies of religious creation, myths, a whole world of unrealities. The religious faith of the heathens reposed in beings who were fictions only, and had never existed; the religious imagination of the time was most prolific; but what the world needed and wanted was reality. Of none of these deities whom men were vainly worshipping could it be said they had actually existed.

Here lay the opportunity and motive of the Church as it began its conquest of the empire — to assert that the Son of God had actually and truly been born into the world of human life as a man, and had actually suffered and died on the cross. The interpretation of these facts was simple and intelligible enough, if the facts only were established and accepted.

But not only was the need of reality the most urgent need of the heathen world, but within the Church itself there was a pressing demand for the actual historic fact, in order to overcome the vicious tendency of the religious imagination, taken over from the heathen world, to get rid of facts, in order to give the imagination a chance to soar. Hence the chief danger to the Church

in the second century was from within, from those who denied the fact of Christ's humanity, who idealized away His birth or His death; who made Him a phantom or a vision, by which new thought had been imparted and a new stimulus given to life. To this way of looking at Christ as humanity personified or idealized, there was added another tendency more dangerous still to true religion — that human life was a low, unworthy thing, that no divine being could descend so low as to take a human body, that human desires and passions were evil. If we should say that in the various forms of Gnosticism, Oriental religion, and particularly Buddhism, was seeking an entrance into the empire through the Christian Church, we should not be far from the truth; or if we were grateful to the old Roman Creed, because it made an emphatic and successful protest against Buddhism and saved the world from the calamity of its gospel of despair, our gratitude would not be misplaced.

The chief error against which the Roman Creed was protesting is known as Docetism — the doctrine that Christ did not have a body or a human birth or an actual death. The Docetists were not averse to the gospel of the infancy or to the miraculous conception and birth of Christ, for they could easily in ways of their

own adjust a miraculous birth to their own purpose, as no real birth, and they were willing to admit that Jesus might in some transcendent way have passed through the body of Mary in order to His manifestation in the world or the impartation of His message. But He was not actually born, and He did not actually suffer or die.

Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (110–117 A.D.) is the writer to whom we turn for evidence as to the original sense of the Creed, in its affirmation, "born of the Virgin Mary." Interesting questions must be passed over here, as irrelevant, whether Ignatius knew the Roman Creed, or whether that Creed originated in Asia Minor and was carried thence to Rome. The tendency of scholars at present is to maintain that it originated at Rome, and was carried from there to Asia Minor. But so early as the time of Ignatius, there were formulas in use, which are striking reminders of the Roman formulas, which couple the birth and the passion in organic connection. The following passage from Ignatius shows how close was the resemblance, but also, which is more important, what was the earliest interpretation: —

> "Jesus Christ, who was descended from David, and was also of Mary; who was truly

born, and did eat and drink; He was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate; He was truly crucified and (truly) died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth; He was truly raised from the dead. ("Ad. Trall," ix.)

Ignatius had heard of the Virgin-birth; he was the first writer to allude to it after its presentation in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew; and he lived not far from the time when those Gospels were published. He liked the miraculous element. The story of the Magi and of the star he retells in his own impressive way. His comment is characteristic, with that tone of mystic exaltation found so often in his writings.

"Now the virginity of Mary was hidden from the prince of this world, as was also her offspring, and the death of the Lord; three mysteries of renown, which were wrought in silence by God." ("Ad Eph.," xix.)

But in dealing with the rule of faith, it is not the Virgin-birth to which he attaches importance, but the actual, human birth of Christ as a real man, with flesh and blood and born of a human mother. These are the references: —

"There is one physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God." ("Ad Ephes.," vii.)

"Jesus Christ was, according to the appointment of God, conceived in the womb by Mary, of the seed of David, but by the Holy Ghost." ("Ad Ephes.," xviii.)

"I desire to guard you beforehand . . . that ye attain to full assurance in regard to the birth and passion and resurrection, which took place in the time of the government of Pontius Pilate, being truly and certainly accomplished by Jesus Christ who is our hope. ("Ad Mag.," xi.)

"He was truly of the seed of David according to the flesh, and the Son of God according to the will and power of God; that He was truly born of a virgin, was baptized by John . . . and was truly, under Pontius Pilate and Herod the Tetrarch, nailed (to the cross) for us in His flesh.

"Now, He suffered all these things for our sakes, that we might be saved. And He suffered truly, even as also He truly raised up Himself, not as certain unbelievers maintain, that He only seemed to suffer . . . for I

know that after His resurrection also, He was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is now." ("Ad Smyr.," ii, iii.)

Out of such phrases and expressions and out of the mood which begot them, arose the old Roman Creed, more terse and condensed and perhaps more emphatic for the omission of adjectives intended to intensify the meaning. That the purpose of Ignatius was to make emphatic the actual human birth, and not the birth from a virgin, is shown by a spurious epistle, attributed to him, which not only imitates his style, but has caught his spirit, and may have been written by the middle of the third century or earlier. It is styled an Epistle to the Tarsians, and is combating later forms of heresy, such as the denial by some of the humanity of Christ (Patripassians and Sabellians), and by others of His divinity, asserting that He is mere man. Against all such he urges the true doctrine of St. Paul: —

"Mindful of him, do ye by all means know that Jesus, the Lord, was truly born of Mary, being made of a woman, and was as truly crucified. . . . And he really suffered and died and rose again."

The testimony of Origen († 254) may also be added. He had learned of the Roman Creed, possibly during his visit in Italy, and had gathered its primary import to be the assertion of Christ's actual human birth, and His actual death: —

> "He assumed a body like to our own, differing in this respect only, that it was born of a Virgin and of the Holy Spirit; that this Jesus Christ was truly born, and did truly suffer, and did not endure this death common (to man) in appearance only, but did truly die," etc.[1]

These passages show that the original purport of the clause — born of the Virgin Mary — was not primarily to assert the Virgin-birth but the actual human birth; and that the name Virgin Mary is given for some other reason, either because it identified Christ with the house of David, from which Mary was supposed to be descended, and thus asserted His Messiahship; or, as in the case of Pontius Pilate for the purpose of identification and exactness, the name Virgin Mary having come to be the familiar designation of our Lord's mother. Although

[1] "De Principiis," i, c. 3.

Ignatius had heard of the Virgin-birth, and twice refers to it, he did not attach to the virginity of Mary any special importance, such as came to be attached to it in the fourth century, when the monastic spirit invading the Church was assigning to virginity a value beyond every other virtue, and some even were inclined to make it a condition of salvation. Thus there is a suggestive expression at the close of the epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnæans which reads: "I salute the families of my brethren, with their wives and children, *and the virgins who are called widows*" (καὶ τὰς παρθένους τὰς λεγομένας χήρας). It has been thought that such unusual language could be explained only on the ground that the virgins whom Ignatius speaks of as "called widows" were deaconesses, who in ecclesiastical order might have been grouped under the class of widows. Bishop Lightfoot after showing that this explanation is untenable gives his own explanation as follows: —

> "This then I suppose to be the meaning of the words: I salute those women, who though by name and in outward condition they are widows, I prefer to call virgins, for such they are in God's sight by their

purity and devotion." ("Apostolic Fathers," iv, 324.) [1]

That the original purport of the clause "born of the Virgin Mary" was to assert the reality of Christ's birth, and not its unique or miraculous character, is further made evident by other features of the Creed. Originally an expansion of the baptismal formula, it had at first in view in its enlargements a thoroughgoing protest against Gnostic heresies. It proclaimed God, the almighty ruler of the universe, in opposition to the many rulers whom the Gnostics presented, who acted as a check on the Divine omnipotence. When this first article of the Creed was completed in accordance with its primary intent, we have the fuller exposition of the Church's faith in contrast with Gnostic aberrations: God, the "*Father*," not an indescribable, ineffable abyss of being; "*Almighty*," not limited by conditions of matter which He could not control;

[1] That a similar mode of thinking and of speaking was characteristic of the early Church so late as the third century is evident from its more influential writers, such as Tertullian, "De Exhort. Castit.," i; "De Virg. Vel.," c. 10; "ad Uxor.," c. 4; also *Clem. Alex.*, "Strom.," viii, 12: "Such are the Gnostic souls which the Gospels likened to the consecrated virgins who wait for their Lord. For they are virgins, in respect of their abstaining from what is evil."

"*Maker of Heaven*," in contrast with the vague conceptions of Gnosticism about an emanation of the heavens (pleroma); "*and earth*," whose origin the Gnostics with singular uniformity denied to have been the work of the supreme God. The emphasis on His "*only Son our Lord*" contradicts the Gnostic teaching of many supernatural beings in a graded order, of whom Christ was one, and the highest. Then comes the affirmation of His perfect humanity and His possession of a human body, which stood prominent among Gnostic negations,—He was "*born*" of a human mother, the Virgin Mary. The Gnostics denied that He was *born;* He emerged from the body of Mary in some way different from human parturition. They also denied that He suffered—He seemed to suffer; or that He actually died on the cross. Here the emphasis of the Creed is intensified, "*He suffered under Pontius Pilate, he was crucified, dead, and buried.*" Other clauses follow to assert the fact of the resurrection, which formed no part of Gnostic teaching.

Gnosticism originated for the most part in Asia Minor, but its chief teachers gravitated to Rome, and the Church in Rome felt more heavily than was felt elsewhere the burden and the responsibility of resistance. Marcion, a

Gnostic teacher, who in some respects was more true to the Pauline doctrine, gave the Roman Church much trouble. Against his special teaching may have been levelled the clause which asserts the coming again of Christ to judgment: "*He shall come again to judge both the quick and dead.*" For judgment and condemnation were alien to Marcion's conception of the Divine goodness and love.[1]

Other parts of the Church met this dangerous invasion of Oriental religion in various ways. Irenæus, in Gaul, wrote his treatise against heresies; Tertullian, in North Africa, produced controversial books against Marcion and the Valentinians; while Clement of Alexandria and Origen sought by an appeal to the higher reason and by a more spiritual interpretation of the Christian faith to accomplish the same end. But Rome produced a creed whose formulas had long been in use, gathering them up into a composite whole. It was not done at once. The Roman Creed was a growth, and a slow one. Clauses continued to be inserted, and by the fourth century it was certainly fuller than it had been when we discern it in the middle of

[1] Cf. Dr. McGiffert's dissertation on "The Apostles' Creed" (N.Y., 1902, Charles Scribner's Sons), for an admirable statement of this view of the Creed as a protest against Gnosticism.

the second century. Not until the eighth century had it taken on its final form as it is recited to-day.

It does not cover the whole purport of this Creed to speak of it as a protest against Oriental religion. It does, indeed, include this purpose, nor can the Creed be understood without keeping this purpose in view. But when the stress of the conflict with Gnosticism was over, other objects of a rule of faith for catechumens came in view. On this point there are still differences of opinion, whether it was a baptismal creed recited as part of the baptismal vow, or a creed imparted to catechumens as part of their training, or whether it was a compendium of the points in Christian belief on which the Church laid emphasis.[1]

Among the additions to the Creed, not in its earlier form, is the clause, "*conceived by the Holy Ghost.*" When this addition was made, by the end of the second or the beginning of the third century,[2] the clause which follows was detached from the clauses which speak of the passion and death. Thus the Creed ultimately read,

[1] Cf. Kattenbusch, "Das Apostolische Symbol.," i, 59 ff.

[2] Cf. McGiffert, pp. 91–92, for the evidence, which seems conclusive. The same view is taken by Harnack, but is critised by Kattenbusch, Bd. ii, 619.

"*conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate,*" etc., becoming a separate article. At this point we touch the most difficult question in the interpretation of the Creed. The various readings indicate that some difficulty was felt from an early period. In the old Roman Creed it ran at first, "*who was born of the Holy Spirit, and Mary the Virgin*" (*qui natus est de Spiritu Sancto et Maria Virgine*). In the Creed as known to St. Augustine, it was, "*who was born through the Holy Spirit from Mary the Virgin*" (*qui natus est per Spiritum Sanctum ex Virgine Maria*). Still another reading in an ancient creed of the fourth century, "*qui natus est de Spiritu Sancto et ex Maria Virgine.*" In the fourth century *conceptus* was substituted for *natus* (359, council of Ariminum), and this change was adopted in the revision of the old Roman Creed in Gaul, and thence has come down to us in our so-called Apostles' Creed. Changes of meaning, which may seem slight, were involved in this use of prepositions, *de* or *per* or *ex*, or the simple conjunction *et*. They seem slight, but they involved no less an issue than the nature of the Incarnation; and the exact question at issue was, "What part in the transaction did Mary have? Was she an equal

partner with the Holy Spirit (*et*), or was her function a subordinate one, as the body is subordinate to the soul, the necessary, earthly agency for the human birth? — the work of the Incarnation being solely of God.

St. Augustine felt the difficulty. In his "Enchiridion" he remarks: —

> "The puzzle is, in what sense it is said, 'born of the Holy Ghost' when He [Christ] is in no sense the Son of the Holy Ghost. . . . When we make confession that Christ was born of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, it is difficult to explain how it is that He is not the Son of the Holy Ghost and is the Son of the Virgin Mary when He was born both of Him and of her. It is clear beyond a doubt that He was not born of the Holy Spirit as His Father, in the same sense that he was born of the Virgin as His mother." ("Enchir.," 38.)

Augustine's answer is admirable, and covers more than one point in the doctrine of the Incarnation. The substance of his solution of the problem is that the Incarnation is a manifestation of the grace of God, by which grace Christ was purified from the womb by the Holy Spirit

in such a way as to leave no entrance for sin. The passage containing his answer is given in full, and will be referred to again.

> "As not every one who is called a son, was born of him whose son he is called, it is clear that this arrangement by which Christ was born of the Holy Spirit, but not as His Son, and of the Virgin Mary as her son, is intended as a manifestation of the grace of God. For it was by this grace that a man, without any antecedent merit, was at the very commencement of his existence as man, so united in one person with the Word of God, that the very person who was Son of man was at the very same time the Son of God, and the very person who was Son of God was at the same time Son of Man; and in the adoption of his human nature into the divine, the grace itself became in a way so natural to the man, as to leave no room for the entrance of sin. Wherefore this grace is signified by the Holy Spirit; for He, though in his own nature God, may also be called the gift of God. And to explain all this sufficiently, if indeed it could be done at all, would require a very lengthened discussion." ("Enchir.," 40.)

From this discussion the conclusion is drawn that in reciting the Creed, the original sense may still be retained, as quite in harmony with the original design of the Creed, with Holy Scripture, and with sound learning. The clause "*born of the Virgin Mary*" would then be connected with the clauses that follow — "*suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.*" Taken thus together they assert the reality of the human birth of Christ, as if it read "born of a woman, the Virgin Mary," and the reality also of His death and passion. "Conceived by the Holy Ghost" then stands as a distinct clause, as it also had a distinct and separate origin,[1] nor can any better interpretation of this clause be found than that given above from St. Augustine.

But there are difficulties connected with the clause, "*conceived by the Holy Ghost*," however we may interpret. It is the reminder of a certain type of theology which was never developed in the ancient church, and never quite reconciled with the prevailing theology of the Eastern Church. If it is taken literally, and coupled with "born of the Virgin Mary" as forming

[1] The words *conceptus est* were not added until after the middle of the fourth century, finding their way into the creed of Southern Gaul, in the fifth and sixth centuries. Cf. McGiffert, p. 189.

one article, it seems to indicate, as Augustine remarked, that Jesus had for His parents the Holy Spirit and Mary. Nor was it an unreal or fanciful possibility, against which Augustine was contending. There was danger at this point.

Augustine held that the Incarnation was accomplished by the influence of the Holy Spirit acting in and from the conception of Jesus, but acting also on the personality of Jesus throughout His life. He laid the stress upon the Divine activity, not upon the human contribution of Mary. So also Athanasius, who ranks with Augustine as the other of the two greatest Church fathers, asserts the Incarnation as the work of Deity alone. He differs, however, from Augustine, in that he does not attribute the Divine agency to the Holy Spirit, but to the Eternal Son Himself, the second distinction in the Godhead, who from His preëxistent state came down and was made man. This thought of the preëxistence of Christ, to which no allusion is made in the Apostles' Creed, was uppermost in the consciousness of religious and theological teachers in the East, and is the badge of Eastern creeds as, compared with Western. And so Athanasius speaks, as representing another way of looking at the Incarnation, when he says: —

"For this purpose, then, the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God comes to our realm, howbeit He was not far from us before. For no part of creation is left void of Him: He has filled all things everywhere, remaining present with His own Father. But He comes in condescension to show loving kindness upon us and to visit us. . . . He takes unto Himself a body and that of no different sort from ours. . . . Being Himself mighty, and Artificer of everything, He prepares the body in the Virgin, as a temple unto Himself, and makes it His very own." ("De Incar.," 8.)

"When He was descending to us, He fashioned His body for Himself from a Virgin, thus to afford to all no small proof of His Godhead, in that He who formed this is also Maker of everything else as well." ("De Incar.," 17. Robertson's ed.)

But not to dwell on this divergence, which would require too much space for its development, and is irrelevant here, it is to be noted that both Athanasius and Augustine, as men filled with the God consciousness, attribute the Incarnation to God alone; and the human agent, the Mother of Christ, stands in the back-

ground of their thought. But they lived at a time when changes were impending, were indeed already in process, and were revolutionizing the old Catholic Church, of the first three centuries, into the Church of the later Byzantine type, or in the West, of the Middle Ages. And the issue turned on the Virgin-birth. These two Church fathers stood on the dividing line; Athanasius died in 373 and Augustine in 430. Both felt some effect of the coming change. Athanasius uses language in speaking of Mary which anticipates the later usage, but the use was rare and exceptional, and may be taken as incidental. And Augustine, that stern man and most rigid of theologians, makes Mary an exception to the working of the all-prevailing law and curse of original sin. His opponent Pelagius would have exempted many others. In making the sole exception of Mary, Augustine seems to be governed rather by motives of courtesy and delicacy than of strict theology. His language has always been noted as somewhat peculiar. But even so, he more than once asserts that Mary was born in original sin. She was conceived in iniquity, for she sinned in Adam. But in the matter of actual transgression Augustine makes a concession in her favor. "Of the Holy Virgin Mary, of whom out of honor to the

Lord, I wish no question to be made where sins are treated of, — for how do we know what mode of grace wholly to conquer sin may have been bestowed upon her who was found meet to conceive and bear Him of whom it is certain that He had no sin?"

The writers in the first three centuries who have most to say about the Virgin-birth belong to the Western, or Latin Church. Justin Martyr defends it against Trypho the Jew; with Justin also originated the famous comparison of Eve and Mary. He lived at Rome, and had come there from Asia Minor, and may have brought with him from thence a tendency to the exaltation of Mary. Justin was followed by Irenæus, who had also felt the influence of Asia Minor and who expanded the famous illustration — how Eve had brought sin and Mary redemption to the world. The comparison was an unfortunate one, but it struck the popular imagination, and it was given greater vogue by Tertullian. That some difficulty was experienced in presenting evidence for the Virgin-birth is seen in the great weight attached to the prophecy in Isaiah vii. 14. The Jews, who were familiar with Hebrew and with their own history, refused to accept it. Justin and Irenæus and Tertullian and others rested upon it, despite the objections.

Origen recognized the difficulty; he had incorporated in the parallel columns of his "Hexapla" three Greek versions of the Old Testament, which were intended as improvements on the Septuagint translation. These versions by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, substituted νεᾶνις for παρθένος, making the famous passage read "a young woman" instead of a "virgin." But when Origen was engaged in meeting the objections of Celsus, and among them the objection to the Virgin-birth, he remarks on this passage: "Now if a Jew should split words and say that the words are not, 'Lo, a virgin,' but 'Lo, a young woman,' we reply that the word 'Olmah' — which the Septuagint have rendered by 'a virgin,' and others by 'a young woman' — occurs, as they say, in Deuteronomy as applied to a virgin"[1] (Deut. xxii, 23, 24). Other arguments were sought from the sphere of animal life, where cases of *parthenogenesis* were cited,[2] to show creative skill and power. Nor was it thought an un-

[1] "Contra Celsum," i, 36.

[2] The fable of the Phœnix was often used as an illustration. Cf. Rufinus, "Expos. Sym. Apost.," c. ii, who also mentions the case of bees. Cf. also Cyril of Jerusalem, who enlarges on the subject in his "Catechetical Lectures," xii, 22 ff.; but by his time the tendency to make the Virgin-birth an essential condition for the Incarnation was the most potent argument (*ob.* 386).

worthy argument to remind the pagans how in their mythology, as well as in the case of some of their famous men, reputed instances of supernatural birth were not uncommon. On the whole it may be said that no additional evidence was alleged in confirmation of the narratives of Matthew and of Luke. There was another line of argument, but that remained yet to be worked out to its rigid conclusion, — that the Virgin-birth was essential to the Incarnation. There are hints of it, but it was not yet made prominent, as it was afterward to become. It is implied in the contrast between Eve and Mary. Tertullian, from whom so many germs of Latin theology proceed, was the first to rationalize on this point and to connect the Incarnation in dogmatic fashion with the Virgin-birth ("De Carne Christi," c. 18).

On the other hand, in the Church of the East, with the exception of Asia Minor, no disposition was seen to urge the Virgin-birth as an essential content of the Christian faith. Clement of Alexandria makes no use of it, even in speaking of the birth of Christ, where the customary allusion would be in order. Origen builds up his argument for the Incarnation in his important treatise "On First Principles," without dependence on it. The Eastern Church attached more

importance to the baptism of Christ than to His birth, to the moment when He began to teach and to preach the Kingdom of God. The best Eastern theologians were more under the influence of the writer of the Fourth Gospel, where no reference is made to the Virgin-birth, but where the Incarnation is the central theme and the teaching of Christ is more amply illustrated than in the synoptics. In general, it may be said that the prologue of the Gospel according to St. John was preferred in the East; while in the Roman Church the preference was given to the prologues of Matthew and Luke. It is a striking circumstance that in the Creed of the Church in Jerusalem, down to the middle of the fourth century, no reference to the Virgin-birth is included.* It was also absent from the Creed of the Church in Cæsarea. But what is more striking still, is its absence from the Creed of the Council of Nicæa, which met for the purpose of determining the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is not a question here, whether the fathers assembled at Nicæa accepted the Virgin-birth; for any reason we know to the contrary they did accept it, but they did not include it in their Creed, from which the inference is they did not rest the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity upon it. So late as 431 A.D., at the

Third General Council, "the Synod gave order under pain of excommunication and deposition, that no other than the Nicene Creed . . . should be used." [1] The Nicene Creed, set forth at Nicæa in 325 A.D., ran as follows: —

> "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things both visible and invisible.
>
> "And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God out of God, Light out of Light, very God out of very God, begotten, not made, of the same substance with the Father; by whom all things were made, both those in heaven and on the earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate and was made man, and suffered and rose again the third day, and ascended into the heavens and will come to judge the living and the dead.
>
> "And in the Holy Spirit." [2]

[1] Hefele, "History of the Councils," Eng. Tr., ii, 71.

[2] The anathemas appended to the Creed are omitted as having no bearing in this connection.

CHAPTER V

THE VIRGIN-BIRTH AND THE INCARNATION AFTER THE FOURTH CENTURY

THE Gospel of the Infancy in the Church of the first centuries and later contributed no important motive to the conversion of the Roman Empire. So far as we know, it was generally received that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary; but no connection had yet been established between the circumstance of His birth and the doctrine of the Incarnation. There were some who denied His supernatural conception and birth. Thus Justin Martyr tells us there were those "who admit that He is Christ, while holding Him to be man of men; with whom I do not agree, nor would I, even though most of those who have the same opinions as myself should say so" ("Dial. cum Tryph.," 48). Cerinthus, the heretic, denied it, as did also the Ebionites. But the Gnostics for the most part accepted the Virgin-birth, they could make use of it in various ways to further their imaginative schemes; substituting "in" or "through" for

"of" a virgin. The Arians also believed in the Virgin-birth, for it quite suited their denial of Christ's complete humanity. The Virgin-birth therefore was no badge of orthodoxy or test of Catholicity.

But the main point is that it formed no vital part of the Church's message, as it had in the beginning no place in the apostolic preaching. The first sermons of Peter (Acts i. 15; ii. 14) omitted its mention, as also St. John and St. Paul were silent regarding it. The work of the apostles and of their successors was to present the mature Christ, the strong Christ, the man who had grown to perfection tested by temptation (Heb. v. 8), the captain of our salvation who learned obedience by the things He suffered. It was not the infant in His mother's arms who made the effective appeal to the old Roman world. The ancient Catholic Church was thinking of other things, preoccupied with the reality of God's existence and His control of the world, and with the mission of Christ to reveal the nature of God, and to establish His Kingdom in the world. Apologetic writers do not occupy themselves with defending the Virgin-birth; some allude to it, others do not, but all alike are supremely absorbed with the issues of the moral life which Christ embodied. In making Christ

known to the men of their age, as a man among men, while yet the incarnation of God, they accomplished that mightiest of tasks, — the conversion of the Roman Empire.

In the course of the fourth century a change set in — a change so great as to amount to a revolution when its results became finally apparent. There are many elements in the process which wrought this revolution which cannot be even alluded to here; only the barest outlines can be mentioned. To put the situation in the largest, most general, way, the causes leading to the deterioration in Church life as well as in thought and in worship were the necessary evils involved in so great a victory as the Church had achieved, when, out of dire persecution, it emerged victorious and became the established religion of the empire under Constantine. A reaction immediately began against the worldliness wherein the Church was now involved, and more particularly a reaction from the vices which stained and defaced the pagan character. This led to the growing and ever more widely prevailing conviction that celibacy (virginity) was the one highest virtue, constituting the angelic life, the imitation of God. The effect of the great Council of Nicæa, which had proclaimed the

co-equality of Christ with the Father, induced a tendency to dwell more exclusively on the divinity of Christ than on His humanity. An able and distinguished bishop, Apollinaris of Laodicea, denied the complete humanity of Christ, holding that He possessed only a human body (σῶμα with ψυχὴ ἄλογος) and that the Divine mind had taken the place of the human mind or reason (ὁ νοῦς). He was condemned as a heretic (A.D. 381), but, as the subsequent history showed, He was not forgotten, His argument carried weight, in reality He had only given expression to the tendency of His own and the following generations. His exact statement was avoided, but approximation was made to His teaching as far as words would allow.

Under these circumstances the Virgin Mary came to the forefront in the popular mind and in the writings of professed theologians. She now became known in common parlance as the Mother of God (θεοτόκος) and as "ever Virgin."[1] It became a matter of faith to main-

[1] For the definition of the phrase "ever Virgin" (ἀειπαρθένος: *semper virgo*), which the Greek and Roman churches invariably add as a gloss to the clause in the Creed, "born of the Virgin Mary," cf. Augustine, "Ep. (137) ad Volus.," c. 8: "The body of the infant Jesus was brought forth from the womb of His mother, still a virgin, by the same power which afterwards introduced His

tain that she had no other children, reversing the opinion of the earlier Church, thenceforth designated as the Helvidian heresy. The Virgin-birth passed from an incident into a sacrosanct doctrine, to be held as essentially related to the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity, and without which they could not be maintained.

But all this could not have been apart from the strange concurrence with that feature of old heathen religion, which shows peoples as yearning after female deities. The worship of Isis, which had achieved wide popularity in the empire, was now transferred to Mary, and the transition of the heathens into the Church became easy and natural. Other female deities there were, popular in the East, — Demeter, Ceres, or great Diana of the Ephesians, — and from these the worship now fell away to a better, more attractive substitute. Mary was now supplanting her Son; the Father and the Son retreat into the background of the people's consciousness; Mary reigns as

body, when He was a man, through the closed doors into the upper chamber." How rigidly Augustine connected this notion of the virginity *in partu* with the clause in the Creed, "born of the Virgin Mary," is evident from "Enchir.," c. 34, and also is it evident how wide his departure from the original sense of the Creed.

the Queen of heaven; the great truth of the fatherhood of God, which Christ proclaimed as the mission of His life, became inoperative.

Asia Minor seems to have been the place where the transition was accomplished. It was a famous workshop of religions, from whence the influence spread into other countries. Here, as is probable, the materials were worked over, of which other lands contributed the germs. From the Western Church was imported into the East the festival of the birth of Christ (360–386 A.D.) on the twenty-fifth of December. How early it was observed in the West is not known, the first allusion to it being as late as 336 A.D.[1] Another contemporaneous change was the combination or fusion of what was characteristic of the Roman Creed (Apostles') with the essential features of the Creed of Nicæa. Under what circumstances this notable result was accomplished is still a question which needs elucidation,[2] but the fact remains that the Creed

[1] Cf. Duchesne, "Origines du Culte Chrétienne," pp. 247 ff. Augustine does not mention Christmas among the festivals universally observed on the authority of the apostles or plenary councils — "the Lord's passion, resurrection and ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven," Ep. 54 (400 A.D.).

[2] Cf. Swainson, "The Nicene and Apostles' Creeds," pp. 85 ff. and 155 ff. See also Hort, "Two Dissertations" on the creeds.

now designated and recited as the Nicene Creed was probably the work of Epiphanius, in whose treatise, "The Anchored One" (c. 374 A.D.), it first appears. Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem, who was suspected of heresy, presented this Creed to the so-called second General Council in 381 A.D., and on the ground of this confession was acquitted. This new creed grew in popular use, till it supplanted the Nicene Creed; and it gained the approval of the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.), under the misapprehension that it was the work of the Council of Constantinople. The new Creed, as Dr. Hort has remarked, had "sung itself" into the heart of the Church, before it received conciliar sanction. From the East it travelled back into the West and supplanted for generations the old Roman (Apostles') Creed.

These facts are mentioned here because of their relation to the process going on in Asia Minor during the fourth century, which was revolutionizing the thought and belief of the Church. Germs, when they are transplanted, may change their character or gain a new vitality. Enough remains in the way of literary débris to show the process of the transformation. Thus, for example, the pseudo Ignatius (c. 340 A.D.), revised the Ignatian Epistles, and brought

it up to date as a text-book. Wherever the genuine Ignatius had mentioned Mary, as he was wont to do without the title Virgin, that designation was inserted, and generally, wherever she was mentioned in the original, or the birth of Christ, there was expansion on the Virgin-birth, whether Ignatius had mentioned it or not. The error into which Ignatius had fallen when he saluted "the virgins who are called widows," was corrected to read, "those that are ever virgins and the widows."

The air was full of forgeries. As the interest in Mary grew, information was needed about her life which the Gospels did not give, and, indeed, regarding her they are most reticent. But the information for which the age was craving was forthcoming in abundance. The story was given of her father and mother (Joachim and Anna), of her own miraculous birth, and her sinless purity, and many details of her betrothal; the birth of Jesus was magnified by many incidents, and the lack of knowledge about His early years was supplemented with miraculous events. No check was placed on the imagination as it now unfolded to the wondering world the Gospel of the Infancy. What impressed the imagination most was the contrast to which words were unequal, of the infant Jesus in His

mother's arms, carrying on the superintendence and control of the universe.[1]

We are now a long way from the original purpose of the old Roman Creed, in its simple affirmation that Christ was *born*, and of the Virgin Mary. The first step in the process of departure followed in consequence of the addition of the clause, "conceived by the Holy Ghost." The miraculous conception was then interpreted as implying the miraculous birth, which meant that He was not actually born by the mode of human birth, but in some supernatural way, with the inevitable inference to follow, that His body was not in all respects like a human body, and that His flesh had some supernatural and life-giving quality. Another inference next read into the Creed carries us still further from the reality and historicity of His earthly life. It began to be asserted that in the Incarnation, the Word, or Eternal Son, did not unite with an individual man, but with

[1] Cf. article in "Dict. Chris. Biog." on "Gospels Apocryphal," by Lipsius, for a description of these writings, influential in the Church despite their origin. The Roman dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary is derived from this source. For the influence of the "Protevangelium" of James and kindred writings upon the most eminent Church fathers, cf. Ambrose, "De Virginitate," ii, 2, who draws the portrait of Mary with many details, as to her character, her mode of life, etc., from these sources.

humanity. Christ it was said was not "a man" but "man." This was practically equivalent, however strenuously it might be denied, to the Apollinarian opinion, that Christ was not a complete or perfect man. For "man" without individuality may answer for a theological abstraction, but is inconceivable in the concrete world of human life.

It is too large a question to be discussed here, whether the usage of the earlier Church in any approved writer sanctioned this view of the imperfect humanity of Christ. It probably arose as a way of thinking in the Eastern Church during or after the fourth century. At any rate we have the testimony of Augustine (†430) to the thought and mode of expression in the West, to which all the more importance attaches, because of his influence, and also because he was sensitive to his reputation for orthodoxy. No one would have known sooner than he, if any change were impending in theological circles on so vital a point. But Augustine spoke of Christ as an individual man in organic union with the Godhead. He did so in the "Confessions," and more dogmatically in his treatise on the Creed. It is sometimes said that Augustine's doctrine of predestination influenced his manner of speaking on this feature

of the Incarnation; but, however that may be, he was not the man to go counter to what he knew to be the prevailing mode of speech, or even apprehended might become such. After having maintained, then, that Christ is the only Son of God, and that He is both God and man, Augustine proceeds: —

"Now here the grace of God is displayed with the greatest power and clearness. For what merit had the human nature in the man Christ earned, that it should in this unparalleled way be taken up into the unity of the person of the only Son of God? What goodness of will, what goodness of desire and intention, what good works had gone before, which made this man worthy to become one person with God? Had he been a man previously to this and had He earned this unprecedented reward, that He should be thought worthy to become God? Assuredly nay: from the very moment that He began to be man, He was nothing else than the Son of God, the only Son of God, the Word who was made flesh, and therefore He was God; so that just as each individual man unites in one person a body and a rational soul, so Christ in one person unites

the Word and man. Now wherefore was this unheard-of glory conferred on human nature, a glory which, as there was no antecedent merit, was of course wholly of grace — except that here those who looked at the matter soberly and honestly might behold a clear manifestation of the power of God's grace, and might understand that they are justified from their sins by the same grace, which made the man Christ Jesus free from the possibility of sin?" [1]

Augustine's doctrine of the Incarnation, which had represented an important tendency of the Latin Church, soon after came to be regarded in the Eastern Church, and especially from the point of view of Cyril of Alexandria, as the rankest heresy. No words, however bitter or scurrilous, were deemed too strong for its condemnation, when it was reproduced, in substance, by

[1] "Enchir.," c. 36, also c. 40, cited *ante*, p. 73. Cf. also "Confess.," vii, 19, and "De Correp. et Grat.," c. 30. The exposition of the attitude of Augustine cannot be attempted here, but it may be said that it involves the question whether the personality of an individual man is capable of growth and expansion under the influence of the Holy Spirit till it includes the universal range of human experience, and so becomes the equivalent of humanity in itself and as a whole. The point is discussed in Slattery's "The Master of the World," pp. 275 ff., and by Briggs, *North Am. Rev.*, June, 1906.

the Antiochian school in the East. But the opposite view, the doctrine of the incomplete humanity, the denial of individuality to the human nature of Christ, cannot be said to have gained the sanction of General Councils. Certainly the Council of Chalcedon did not teach it, nor does anything in its acts necessarily warrant the inference that Christ was "man," and not "a man," or that individuality did not of necessity inhere in His human nature. The decision of Chalcedon was that in Christ there were two natures and one person. Beyond that the council did not go. But others did go beyond this statement, reading into it what it did not originally contain. For the Council of Chalcedon, in which the influence of the Western Church was strong, had rendered a decision not acceptable to the Church as a whole in the East. It had also, while adopting the Western view of the Incarnation, neutralized it to some extent in approving the term "Mother of God" (θεοτόκος) as the designation of Mary.

It therefore became necessary in the East to work over the decision of Chalcedon, in order to bring it into harmony with the prevailing popular theology. This was done first by Leontius of Byzantium (c. 485–543 A.D.). What Newman undertook to do for the Articles of the

Anglican Church, in the nineteenth century, Leontius accomplished in the sixth century for the decrees of Chalcedon, giving them a sense which reversed their original purport, and by means of which he accommodated himself to their statements. "He was the first definitely to maintain that the human nature of Christ has its personality in the Logos." [1] "A devout disciple of Apollinaris," says Harnack, "might properly have said, in reference to the phrase of Leontius, 'the personality of the human nature is in the Logos' (*ὑποστῆναι ἐν τῷ λόγῳ*), that Apollinaris said about the same thing, but said it in plainer words." [2]

From this time, and in consequence of this view of the Person of Christ, no further interest

[1] Cf. Harnack, "Dogmengesch.," ii, 383 ff., Eng. tr., v. 232 ff. Also Loofs, "Leitfaden," 175, 185.

[2] See *ante*, p. 131. The consequence of the doctrine of the impersonality of the human nature — a doctrine, says Dorner, "sanctioned by no Œcumenical Council" — is this, "Instead of our seeing God in Christ, who is also the veritable Son of man, full of grace and truth, the humanity of Christ must, logically, be lowered to the position of a mere selfless *ὄργανον* of God, or even to that of a mere temple or garment." It was a further consequence, that the Church "made such a use of the doctrine of the impersonality of the human nature, that the tendency toward the magical view of the operations of grace and toward transubstantiation, which was characteristic of the Middle Ages, found ever increased satisfaction." Dorner, "Person of Christ," vol. iii, pp. 116, 119.

was felt in the study of the life of Christ, nor any effort made to get deeper insight into His consciousness, or His teaching. "The Exposition of the Orthodox Faith," by John of Damascus (754–787), is an illustration of the mechanical method of dealing with the life of Jesus, after separating Him from humanity and nullifying His human nature, no matter how strongly in mere formulas that humanity may be asserted. Nor is there any hope for the Orthodox Church of the East so long as the Damascene remains its most authoritative theologian. Since Christ, as the Damascene affirms, "is not an individual," and since the Incarnation was complete from the moment of His conception, actual growth in "wisdom" or "in favor with God and man" cannot be predicated without qualification. "He receives no addition to these attributes," but rather manifests, as the occasion demands, the wisdom already possessed, adapting it to the moment as the years increase, and simulating these for human growth ("Expos.," 32). The Gospel narrative tells us that He feared, and these are His own words, "*Now* is my soul troubled." John admits the fear was real, and not apparent, but "*now* means just when He willed" to be troubled ("Expos.," 23). He prayed, but not because He felt any "need of

uprising toward God," but because it was the action appropriate to the moment, and in order to become an example to us. And so when He said, *Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will but as thou wilt*, "Is it not clear to all," so runs the comment, "that He said this as a lesson to us to ask help in our trials only from God, and to prefer God's will to our own, and as a proof that He did actually appropriate to Himself the attributes of our nature?" (34, 35).[1]

The view of the Incarnation maintained by John of Damascus met with clear-sighted opposition for the first time in the teaching of Luther, who, according to Dorner,

> "insisted on the reality of the humanity of Christ, even in the matter of growth. He earnestly and distinctly repudiates all those mythical elements which the legends of the Church had introduced into the life of the child Jesus. Not merely as to the physical, but also as to the spiritual aspects of Christ's

[1] Cf. Dorner, "Person of Christ," iii, 205 ff., for a critical study and estimate of John of Damascus. His "Exposition" was translated into Latin, and from its use by Peter the Lombard, his teaching on the Incarnation passed over into scholastic mediæval theology and held its own until the Reformation brought a change, and Augustine came again to his own.

humanity, does he maintain that He underwent an actual development. He was in all respects like other children, with the single exception of sin. Though he decidedly represents the life of Jesus as at once divine and human from the very commencement, he is equally sincere in teaching that He increased, as in years, so also in wisdom and in favor with God and men. His humanity was not omniscient but was under the necessity of learning, though perhaps not from men. Although the Spirit did dwell in Him from the beginning, but as His body grew, and His reason grew in a natural way like that of other men, so did the Spirit penetrate into and pervade Him even more fully and moved Him the longer the more. It is, therefore, no pretence when Luke says: He became strong in the Spirit. The older He grew, the greater He grew; the greater, the more rational; the more rational, the stronger in Spirit and the fuller of wisdom before God, in Himself, and before the people. These words need no gloss. Such a view too is attended with no danger, and is Christian; whether it contradicts the articles of faith invented by them or not, is of no consequence. Although Jesus continued

invariably obedient, He was, notwithstanding, compelled to learn obedience. The traditional expedient of saying that Christ merely played our part, Luther refused to employ."[1]

It may not be inappropriate to introduce here a similar representative utterance of Anglican theology. It is taken from a sermon by the late Archer Butler, on the text, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"; and it is chosen for citation here because of its beautiful and felicitous expression of a great truth: —

"I speak then of the daily self-denial of the Son of God which is here set forth as the model of ours, for it is only as we understand the model that we can expect to understand the copy. . . . I bring before you this divine person visiting the regions of pain in such a sense as to be our *example;* for so the text represents Him. I exhibit Him, as it does, suffering as He would have us suffer, suffering, therefore, that He may accomplish a refining and exalting change upon Himself;

[1] Cf. Dorner, "Person of Christ," Eng. tr., div. ii, vol. ii, pp. 91 ff., from whose presentation the above is slightly abridged.

not then upon Himself simply as God, for as such change and exaltation are alike impossible, but upon Himself as man, and, therefore, susceptible of all the improvement which the original principles of that part of the creation will allow. It is of the fiery trial I would speak, through which He bore *our* nature, till He had, Himself the sufferer, made it fit to be the shrine of a God, the temple in which He has chosen to dwell for everlasting. Christ the Atoner we acknowledge and adore; but it is before Christ the Purifier we bend to-day.

"That this purifying purpose in the sufferings of Christ is recognized in the Scriptural accounts of His redemption of our race, I suppose I need not remind you. The 'refiner's fire' was itself refined; Himself He perfected to perfect us. He is everywhere described as being ever *tempted*, just as we are, though ever victorious, as — alas! — we are not; nor can we doubt the disciplinary character of this constant and painful struggle, when we are told that, 'though a Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered,' that He was 'made perfect through sufferings,' and by that means 'became the author of eternal salvation to

all them that obey Him.' Everywhere His trial is made accurately to answer to our own. Nor surely can we, with any reason, doubt that its result upon His own humanity must have been similar to that which we know the same processes produce, and are intended to produce, among ourselves. We find Him immersed in the same difficulties, supported by the same faith, acting in view of the same reward, 'in all things made like unto His brethren'; and we know that His human nature was capable of the natural course of advancement, that He could '*grow* in wisdom,' and in years; we may well believe that even in Christ Himself those vigils of prayer so often recorded, those weary wanderings, those patient 'endurances of contradictions,' the agonies of the garden, the final struggle of the cross, had power to raise and refine the human element of His being beyond the simple purity of its original innocence; that though ever and equally 'without sin,' the dying Christ was something more consummate still than the Christ baptized in Jordan." [1]

[1] "Sermons," First Series, Philadelphia, 1856, 57–58. The publication of these sermons was an event, both in England and America. The lamented author, a divine of the Church of Eng-

This quotation does not exhaust the argument. The writer goes on to say that the principle at issue in the Incarnation is that virtue tried and triumphant ranks above innocence. If Christ were to possess the utmost perfection of our nature in the humanity allied to His Godhead, He must possess it in the state of victorious trial. Such a state might have been wrought by some sudden and supernatural illapse of grace. "But such a perfection thus struck out at a beat by the instantaneous omnipotence of miracle, would have formed a manhood so utterly removed from our own, that it would have neutralized nearly every discernible purpose of Him, who in the fulness of an all-pervading sympathy with man as such, 'took not on Him the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham.'" Nor is it "any more a derogation to the dignity of Christ to suppose him capable of moral advancement," or that "as a man he should have been capable of improvement," than it is to hold that "as a man He should not be infinite." [1]

But it was just this view of the person of Christ which John of Damascus held in abhorrence,

land, died at the age of thirty-three. At the time of his death he was professor of philosophy in the University of Dublin. After his death was published his "Lectures on Ancient Philosophy."

[1] "Sermons," iii, 58, 59.

and for which he reserved his strongest epithets of condemnation. To his mind it undid the Incarnation; it was an insult to Christ, for He was not "a man" nor an "individual man"; and by the instantaneous omnipotence of a miracle in the womb of the Virgin, He had been made pure and stainless and His moral perfection was complete from His birth.

The word which includes and sums up the doctrine of John of Damascus, is θεοτόκος, "*the Mother of God*," as applied to Mary. About that word the whole long controversy turned in the ancient Church, from the fifth to the end of the seventh century, until the weary struggle was over. Its use originated in the East, in the fourth century, and it stimulated, as well as justified, the worship of Mary, whatever may have been its source. The word was unheard of in the first three centuries. Nor did the Western or Latin Church take kindly to it at first. In commenting on the actual birth of Christ, in connection with the words, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come," Augustine remarks: —

> "He rather admonishes us to understand that, *in respect of His being God, there was no mother for Him*, the part of whose personal

majesty He was preparing to show forth in the turning of water into wine. But as regards being crucified, He was crucified in respect of His being man, and that was the hour which had not come as yet, at the time when this word was spoken, 'What have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come'; that is, the hour at which I shall recognize thee. For at that period, when He was crucified as man, He recognized his human mother and committed her most humanely to the care of the best-beloved disciple."

Pope Celestine († 432) first used the word θεοτόκος in the West, during the Pelagian controversy. Leo the Great († 461) used it, but sparingly. In his time the fierce controversy had begun in the course of which θεοτόκος was sanctioned as the highest and final test of orthodoxy. That controversy had been precipitated by Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who did not realize that the word stood not only for a theory of the Incarnation, but also expressed the ground for the worship of Mary as the highest of all celestial beings, who stood close to the throne of the Eternal Trinity. His rejection of the term "Mother of God" produced, says Socrates, the historian, "a discussion which agitated

the whole Church, resembling the struggle of combatants in the dark, all parties uttering the most confused and contradictory assertions."[1] When the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.) gave its approval to the word θεοτόκος, the great crowd of people filling the city "burst forth into exclamations of joy, and escorted the judges who had deposed and excommunicated Nestorius with torches and incense to their homes, celebrating the occasion by a general illumination."

[1] By Nestorianism is generally understood such a separation of the two natures in Christ as to amount virtually to a double personality. At the time of the controversy he was charged with denying the divinity of Christ. On this point the words of a contemporary, Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, are worthy of being recalled: "Then indeed the discussion which agitated the whole Church resembled the struggle of combatants in the dark, all parties uttering the most confused and contradictory assertions. The general impression was that Nestorius was tinctured with the errors of Paul of Samosata and Photinus, and was desirous of foisting on the Church the blasphemous dogma that the Lord was a mere man; and so great a clamor was raised by the contention that it was deemed requisite to convene a general council to take cognizance of the matter in dispute. Having myself perused the writings of Nestorius, I shall candidly express the conviction of my own mind concerning him; and as, in entire freedom from personal antipathies, I have already alluded to his faults, I shall in like manner be unbiassed by the criminations of his adversaries to derogate from his merits. I cannot then concede that he was either a follower of the heretics with whom he was classed, or that he denied the Divinity of Christ: but he seemed scared at the term theotokos, as though it were some terrible phantom." ("H. E.," vii, 32.)

There is an ancient "Oration, concerning Simeon and Anna," wrongly attributed to Methodius, whose exact date is unknown, but it expresses the mood of the hour, when, after the victory of Ephesus, Mary was enthroned as a deity to be worshipped.

"What shall I say to thee, O mother virgin and virgin-mother. For the praise even of her, who is not man's work, exceeds the power of man. . . . Receive, O Lady most benignant, gifts precious, and such as are fitted to thee alone, O thou who art exalted above all generations, and who among all created things both visible and invisible shinest forth as the most honorable. . . . God is in the midst of thee, and thou shalt not be moved, for the Most High hath made holy the place of His tabernacle. . . . By thee the Lord hath appeared, the God of hosts with us. . . . Blessed of the Lord is thy name, full of divine grace, and grateful exceedingly to God, mother of God, thou that givest light to the faithful, . . . the mother of the Creator, . . . the upholder of Him who upholds all things by His word . . . the spotless robe of Him who clothes Himself with light as with a garment. Thou

hast lent to God, who stands in need of nothing, that flesh which he had not, in order that the omnipotent might become that which it was His good pleasure to be. What is more splendid than this? What than this is more sublime? He who fills earth and heaven, whose are all things, has become in need of thee, for thou hast lent to God that flesh which He had not. Thou hast clad the mighty one with that beauteous panoply of the body, by which it has become possible for Him to be seen by mine eyes. Hail! Hail! Mother and handmaid of God. Hail! Hail! thou to whom the great Creator of all is a debtor," etc.[1]

In the "Dialogues" of Theodoret († 457), — the "Blessed" Theodoret, as his title runs, — bishop of Cyrus, may be found the argument

[1] Among the prayers offered to the Virgin Mary, these are cited in the writings of the English Reformers, as involving blasphemy: —

"Our hope and trust are put in thee, O Virgin Mary; defend us everlastingly."

"O happy mother which dost purge us from our sins."

"Thou art the mediator between God and Man, the advocate of the poor, the refuge of all sinners."

"Thou art the Lady of Angels. Thou art the Queen of Heaven. Command thy Son. Show thyself to be a mother. He is thy Son; thou art His mother; the mother may command; the child must obey."

"Come unto her all ye that travail and are heavy laden."

of a great thinker, who disputed the term "Mother of God" as defective and inaccurate, and dangerous, since it suppressed the humanity of Christ, and gave one-sided expression to His divinity. But it was for just that reason, that the term was welcome. It made the humanity illusory and unreal, in order to establish the unity of the personality. The humanity was absorbed in the divinity. All that remained of the humanity was the *pneumatic* flesh, the garb of deity, the flesh with its life-giving power, which Mary contributed. It is not without a sense of pathos one reads the protest of Theodoret, now that fifteen centuries have gone by since he wrote. The tide was against him; his protest was in vain. What Newman wrote, when he became aware that the doctrine of papal infallibility would be decreed, we may take as the language Theodoret might have used as he witnessed the revolution in the ancient Church. "If it is God's will that the phrase 'Mother of God' shall be confirmed, then it is God's will to throw back the times and moments of that triumph which He has destined for His Kingdom, and I shall feel I have but to bow my head to His adorable, inscrutable Providence."

Most inscrutable was the Providence brooding over that ancient Eastern world while these

things were transacting. Heroic efforts had not been wanting, and many sacrifices had been made to overcome the tendency which was dissipating the humanity of Christ into an illusory dream, and these efforts may not have been wholly in vain, for future ages, even though at the time they were futile. Nothing could stem the tide which was sweeping over the imagination of the people and carrying the Church to the enthusiastic worship of the *Mother of God*. The strength of a people lies in its consciousness of God; and just in proportion as it knows God and worships Him is a people strong. But God was disappearing from the thought and life. And Christ also, the strong Christ of the Gospels, the leader of humanity, who had come to reveal God, He had been reduced to an infant in His mother's arms, and it was the Christ-child who could appeal to His mother's love and sympathy, which also appealed to the deteriorating religious instincts of the age. When the Providence of God was fully revealed, it broke upon the world in the invasion of the Saracens, who easily took possession of the territory of the Eastern Church. Asia Minor, nursing mother of so many religions, where the cult of the Virgin Mary had also found most fertile soil, succumbed to the invasion of the followers

of the prophet, whose war-cry and religion were the same, "There is one God." That had been also the original war-cry of the Christian Church as it entered the Roman Empire to begin its unparalleled career of conquest. Turn to the Christian apologists of the age before Constantine for the impressive contrast. Very little had they to say about the Virgin-birth and nothing about the Mother of God. They were preoccupied with God the Father, the Being spiritual and invisible, whose providence over all the world was most real and powerful, and extended to each individual man, who ruled the world in righteousness and was calling it to judgment. This conviction of God had been raised to the highest degree of motive power by the coming of Christ, His only Son our Lord, and it was not the glories of Mary, nor the winning arts of the Christ-child that broke the power of the Roman Empire, but the strong Lord Christ, whom the apologists drew as a real man, in the historic reality of his earthly life. God was then in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself and fulfilling the promise and potency of the Incarnation. But when the Eastern Church entered on the way of decline and degeneracy — it was about the middle of the fifth century that the decline began to be apparent,

which is also the date of the great Council of Chalcedon — then it is not God they are talking and thinking about, but the relation of Christ to Mary, and how the Virgin-birth is related to Christ's divinity and to the salvation of mankind. In the earlier age when the Church was winning its stupendous victory over the Roman Empire, the divinity of Christ and his Godhood had been set forth as most manifest in His life and character, His deeds, His words. In the age that followed, of decline and weakness, His divinity had come to be dependent on the exact nature of the incident of His birth. In the earlier period they were fighting to the death the corrupt mythology of the old world, which concealed God or denied Him. In the later age the mythological tendency revived, with the Virgin-mother for its centre, and God was smothered in the mazy labyrinth where the consciousness of the Church was wandering.

How was it in Western or Latin Christendom? We cannot tell what Augustine might have done, had he lived to confront the Council of Ephesus or the Council of Chalcedon, as they gave their sanction to the expression "Mother of God," wherein was wrapped up, as in a germ, that theory of the Incarnation which he rejected. He was taken away from the evil to come. The

West was fast sinking into barbarism, in the year 430 when he died, and in that very year the Vandals were knocking for entrance at the gates of Hippo. It was no longer a time for theologizing. Dialectic gave way to organization and to action. No one arose after him who was his equal in the West. He was read and studied, and his name carried great influence both in the earlier and later Middle Ages. But so far as the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Eucharist were concerned, Western theologians followed other lights. They finally yielded to the prestige of the East on these issues, and not Augustine, but John of Damascus became their teacher. They were aware as they made their departure in this direction that Augustine no longer served them. When his name and authority were appealed to in behalf of doctrines the Church was rejecting, the answer was made that "the holy doctor of Hippo, fatigued by the labors of composition, had not always made his thought sufficiently clear; and thus was explained how, for the ignorant, he was a source of error; but if, what was impossible should be the case, he had erred upon so great a mystery, it would be, indeed, an occasion for repeating the words of St. Paul, 'If an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that

which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.'" [1] So John of Damascus superseded Augustine on the Incarnation, as Dionysius the Areopagite on the doctrine of the Eucharist. The Eastern, or Oriental, interpretation of the Christian mysteries dominated the West. From the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the worship of the Virgin-mother made rapid strides. Already indeed the Latin Church was adding another element to the Marian mythology, — the immaculate conception of Mary, which the Eastern Church had not known. But this was thought necessary in order to make more secure the sinlessness of Christ and the purity of His life-giving flesh. It did not become a formal dogma till a later age (1854), but it was a belief widely prevalent from the twelfth century and earlier.[2]

And the outcome of it all in Western Chris-

[1] "Durandus Troarnen," cited by Batiffol, in "L'Eucharistie," p. 379.

[2] Roman Catholic theologians defend the recent Latin dogma (1854) that Mary herself was immaculately conceived, on the ground that it is contained implicitly in the action of the Third General Council which canonized Mary as the Mother of God. The Roman Church, says Duchesne, received the cult of the Virgin Mary from the Greek Church (*d'importation byzantine*), and Latin theologians are surprised when Episcopal voices in the Greek Church now protest against the new honors which the Roman Church has decreed to the Mother of God. ("Églises Séparées," p. 110.)

tendom. The consciousness of the Latin Mediæval Church found most rare and wonderful expression in the ecclesiastical art of the Renaissance. There it was unmistakably evident, even if it were not in so many other ways, that it was the Virgin Mary, not God, not Christ, whom Christendom was worshipping, to whom it looked for aid and protection. Once more the conviction is borne in upon us by the teaching of history that it is the consciousness of God which makes a people strong. That consciousness had well-nigh died out in Italy, where the Renaissance had its birth. As the contents of the mediæval religious life were exhibited on the canvas with the skill of a matchless art, the proportions of faith became apparent. The land was covered with Madonnas; the people fed upon them to satiety. The few efforts to represent God the Father resulted in a venerable head, weak and inefficient and lacking even the power of Jupiter Capitolinus, who seems to have been taken for a model. It may have been the limits of art that were at fault. None the less striking is the result. And as for Italy, alone among the nations she was unable to take the first steps toward national independence and freedom, but fell under the thraldom of a foreign power, going down into the sleep of death for ages before her resurrection came.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHANGE IN THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION AT THE REFORMATION

THE most characteristic feature of the English people, of the English Church and the English nation in the sixteenth century is the prevailing sense of the presence of God. It may be discerned in the literature of the age, which, in its ephemeral products even, assumes a religious tone, because of the consciousness that the will of God is manifested in the nation's experience. Only this deep, widespread conviction, that God was acting, leading, and protecting the nation, would have sufficed to carry it through the perils of the great transition. The state took on a divine character, the king's will was regarded as divine, because it was in harmony with the people's will, and the will of the people was reflecting the will of God. The majesty of the Divine supremacy dwarfed all minor considerations and relegated them to a subordinate position. This feeling grew from the time when England, first of the nations,

stepped forth from the fold of mediæval Christendom, declaring the state to be independent, and, under God, competent to rule its own affairs. From this time (1534) the belief grew stronger that God was leading, and in Him was protection and safety; till it culminated, at the moment when Latin Christendom, under the leadership of the Pope, concentrated its energies for the conquest of the rebellious nation. Then, at the Armada, it became the national conviction that the victory was not due to human agencies. "God blew" with His winds, and the fleet of the enemy was scattered or went down like lead in the mighty waters, and England was free. From that time England's greatness began to be felt. She advanced to the leadership among the nations, and has developed into a world power, in comparison with which the civilization that grew up around the Mediterranean Sea, with Rome as its centre, seems small and insignificant.[1]

In this great hour of her history, the English

[1] There are many histories of England and of the Reformation, but in none of them have the issues at stake been more clearly apprehended than by Froude. The criticism his work encountered was inspired to a large degree by religious and political prejudices. "He held strong views," says Pollard, "and he made some mistakes; but his mistakes were no greater than those of other historians, and there are not half a dozen histories in the English language which have been based on so exhaustive a survey of original materials." "Life of Cranmer," p. viii.

Church was not engaged in an attempt to shore up the tottering Christianity of the Middle Ages or even of the ancient catholic Church in so far as it had influenced perversely mediæval dogmatic forms. To get back to the will of Christ and to the commandments of God was the deliberate intention. At such moments in history it is given to see more plainly the issues that are vital to national prosperity. The English Reformation had in it the elements of revolution. It was not the letter and the text of creeds, but Scripture as the Word of God, to which the Church gave the highest place. And the doctrine which the Church received was received from Scripture, not from tradition; *as Christ had commanded* and not as men had taught.

The chief evil to be overcome was not, as in the case of Germany, the system of indulgences, for from that evil England had not so greatly suffered; but rather the worship of man, which had been substituted for the worship of God. Mary worship, saint worship, image worship, against these the protest was made; and the steps taken to secure their abolition were radical and thoroughgoing, quite as much so as in any other country where the Reformation prevailed.

It is apparent that the primary object was to give Christ an opportunity once more to be known

in Himself, apart from His mother, — to be heard and seen, as when He once lived among men. For this reason Scripture was made supreme, because it contained the record of His life and the comment on that life by inspired evangelists, apostles, and teachers. The Church before the Reformation had lost the clew to the meaning of the New Testament, and for that reason did not find it so edifying as extracts from the fathers. A higher conception of the Incarnation, which made the life of Christ historic and real, instead of illusory and perfunctory, was the first consideration, — in accordance with the words of St. Augustine: —

> "It behoveth us, to take great heed, lest while we go about to maintain the glorious Deity of Him which is man, we leave Him not the true bodily substance of a man." (Ep., 187.)

To insist upon His glorious Deity, but also to regain the humanity which had been lost, was the aim. The Church of England redefined the doctrine of the Incarnation, and as General Councils stood in the way, or their wrong interpretation, she cleared the ground for action by declaring that they not only "might err," but "had

erred in things pertaining to God." When it came to defining the Incarnation, the term "Mother of God," which the councils had sanctioned, was rejected. With that exception, the second of the Thirty-nine Articles is in substantial harmony with the definition of the Council of Chalcedon, but that exception is an important and vital one.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Article II

The Son which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man.

THE SYMBOL OF CHALCEDON, 451

We, then, following the holy Father, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable (rational) soul and body; consubstantial (coessential) with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, *the Mother of God*, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only begotten, to be acknowl-

CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Continued

THE SYMBOL OF CHALCEDON, 451 — *Continued*

edged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one can measure the significance of this action of the Church without full knowledge of the history of the fifth century. Two things were involved in it. One was the removal of the curse which had lain upon the Antiochican School, because they spoke against the term, *Theotokos:* "Nestorius hated of God, and Diodorus, and Theodorus of Mopsuestia and their diabolical tribe," says the theologian John of Damascus; and the other result was the freedom gained for theological advance by emancipation from the prescription of tradition. The word *theotokos* was mischievous and misleading. It jars upon the reader of the definition of Chalcedon as not in harmony with its real purpose, — a com-

promise or concession made in the interest of peace, and not in the interest of truth. At the time when the term was first introduced, Augustine had said that "as God, Christ had no mother." The Church of England now eliminated the word from her formularies as well as from her definition of the faith.[1] The word which had abounded in ancient theologies and liturgies passed out of use and was well-nigh forgotten, except as a theological curiosity or historical reference. As such Coleridge encountered it and made this comment: —

[1] Neither Newman, in Tract xc, nor Pusey, in his defence of it ("The Articles treated on in Tract xc," London, 1841), has alluded to the rejection of θεοτόκος. Both overlook the fact, in their explanation of Article xxi, that the decisions of the Third and Fourth General Councils have been curtailed and in part cast aside. But that these Councils have erred, even in things pertaining to God, does not and ought not to destroy the veneration in which General Councils are to be held. Cranmer has given the true judgment in the "Reformatio Legum," "de Summa Trinitate," c. 14, where, after stating that we pay the greatest deference to the œcumenical councils (ingentem honorem libenter deferimus), he proceeds: Quibus tamen non aliter fidem nostram obligandam esse censemus, nisi quatenus ex Scripturis sanctis confirmari possint. Nam concilia non nulla interdum errasse, et contraria inter sese definivisse, partem in actionibus juris, partim etiam in fide, manifestum est." Cf. Hardwick, "His. of the Articles," p. 409. The same qualification is found in the Canon of 1871, — the doctrine must be gathered from Scripture. Cf. Cardwell, *Synodalia*, i. p. 126.

> "Nestorius was perfectly justifiable in his rejection of the epithet θεοτόκος, as applied to the mother of Jesus. The Church was even then only too ripe for the idolatrous *hyper-dulia* of the Virgin. . . . For an epithet, which conceals half of a truth, the power and concerningness of which relatively to our redemption by Christ depends on our knowledge of the whole, is a deceptive, and dangerously deceptive, epithet." (*Op. cit.*, v, p. 60.)

In this connection there was one obvious passage which occurs often in the writings of the Reformers, — the words of Jesus, when they told Him that *His mother* and His brethren stood without desiring to speak to Him. "And He said unto them, Who is *my mother* and who are my brethren? He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is *my mother* and sister and brother."

If it be said, as of late it has been said, that only the Universal Church, united in all its branches, can speak with authority in defining Christian doctrine, the answer is that the Church of England has spoken for herself, and without consultation with the rest of Christendom, nay, even, in opposition to it. The fact remains,

however it may fare with the theory. And surely the Church of England had as much right to reject a dogmatic statement of the Council of Chalcedon as the Pope had to reject its twenty-eighth canon, which limited his ecclesiastical prerogative, as the former limited theological freedom and advance. And the National Church of England was standing on the same ground, when in the Articles it redefined the faith, as was the group of National Churches assembled at Trent, when they put forth their dogmatic decisions. In the sixteenth century this principle was recognized and accepted as valid.[1]

The word *theotokos* may now be dismissed. It has been dwelt upon, because it was the hinge of the controversy in the fifth century, when the ancient Church was making its departure from the earlier conception of the Incarnation; when it was renouncing the individuality of the human nature of Christ, and attributing to His Mother

[1] Also the Eastern or Greek Church put forth in 1643 its "Orthodox Confession," without consultation with other branches of the Church Universal. Deep and important as the differences are between the historic branches of the Church of Christ, there does run beneath them all a common element, sometimes known as "undenominational Christianity," which means, in other words, devotion to the person of Christ, however inadequately apprehended. Therein lies the hope of a common Christendom, something always to be spoken of with respect and reverence.

the inheritance of sanctity and purity which marked His human nature, instead of to the grace of God, or the action upon Him of the Holy Spirit. At the Reformation all the Protestant churches alike rejected, without discussion, the designation of Mary as the "Mother of God." In England neither Cranmer nor any of the Reformers attempted to work out a theory of the Incarnation. It was not the English way. They were content with the freedom gained by the excision of the objectionable phrase, whose results, as they had been manifested in the history of the Church, were a better commentary on its tendency than any abstract reasoning. That they appreciated the importance of regaining the full humanity of Christ may be inferred from a passage in the Homily on the Nativity and also from places in the Book of Common Prayer where the Manhood is associated with the Godhood in emphatic manner. Thus in the exhortation of the communion office the reference to "the death and passion of our Saviour Christ *both God and man;*" or in the Second Article, "whereof is one Christ, *very God and very man;*" or again in Article VII, "Christ the only mediator between God and man, being *both God and man.*"

Reference has already been made to the theo-

logical views of the Reformers in the sixteenth century, who gave to the Church the Book of Common Prayer. We return to the subject again, for the purpose of learning more definitely the meaning of those formularies, — the vows of the ordinal, the interpretation of the creeds, the "doctrine of Christ, as Christ hath commanded, and as this Church hath received the same, according to the commandments of God."

It might naturally be objected that no body of men in any one age should have the authority to determine the interpretation of the doctrine of this Church for subsequent ages. But we are concerned with the fact; and the fact remains that the Reformers did devise the vows of the ordinal, which were substituted for the vows of the old order. If the question of clerical honesty is at issue, there is no other way than to get back to the original purport of our formularies, and this can only be done by ascertaining the mind of those who wrote them. Whether they ought to be in the Prayer Book or not is another question. They are there. And such is the subtle force of the written word, that an influence constantly emanates from the action of the Reformers, and must always continue to do so, no matter how far we may have wandered from the original sense. In a church constituted

on such a basis, the spirit of the Reformation will never be without its witnesses, more especially as that spirit meant the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free.

But again, in further reply to the possible objection which may question the equity of tying a church to the standards of the sixteenth century, it must be said that the age of the Reformation stands out in history with a singular and unparalleled preëminence. It was a great revealing epoch in the history of religion, as well as of the human mind, to be compared only with the age of the advent of Christ, or of that earlier moment in history when the prophets arose in Israel. The greatness of the Reformation age was illustrated in the coming to the birth of the modern nations, when the freedom of humanity was secured in its essential principle, and the world entered upon a new career of progress; when for the first time a real and genuine catholicity became possible, and the old conventional catholicity, which hovered around an inland sea, gave way to a universality, of which oceans were the highway and the whole area of the globe the theatre of action.

The greatness of the age of the Reformation, which entitles it to speak with authority to subsequent ages, was the mighty, all-controlling

sense of the power and the presence of God. In the power of that presence, the humanitarianism of the Middle Ages, which gave birth to institutions and customs, shelters, places of refuge, penitential methods with indulgences annexed, shielding men from the consciousness of the immediate relationship with God,—these things grew weak and God alone was exalted in that day. Hence the Reformers gained the supreme confidence, the amazing boldness to speak, so that they did not need to take thought beforehand, for it was not so much they that spoke, as the Holy Spirit that was speaking through them. To get back again to the reality was the predominant aim, and in so doing to get rid of all the lower worships of Mary and of the saints, which had hidden God from view. Since tradition stood in the way of this return, they made war upon tradition, no matter how long established or lofty its prestige. No human authority intimidated. No church was infallible, only God was that. To the Bible they turned, as the Word of God, and as containing all things necessary to salvation. From the Bible, they learned the way to the true doctrine of the Incarnation, from which the Church of the fifth century or earlier had departed.

And the true doctrine of the Incarnation re-

quired that the glory should be attributed to God and not to Mary. To Mary as "the Mother of our Saviour," [1] — such was the designation of the Reformers, they gave becoming, but no undue, reverence. It was the common belief of all the reformers alike, whether in England or on the Continent: —

> "We do not hold Christ to be free from all taint merely because He was born of a woman unconnected with a man, but because he was sanctified by the Spirit, so that the generation was pure and spotless." (Calvin, "Instit.," ii, c. 13.)

The Reformers challenged the whole mass of subtle speculation, which attributed to the Virgin-birth as such, the breaking of the entail of sin. They did not deny the Virgin-birth, they affirmed it when the occasion of their subject demanded. But their criticism, their comment, must have almost seemed to their adversaries as tantamount to denial, for they made little or no effort to explain or justify, they attached for the most part slight importance to the circumstance, they put at times such an interpretation on the

[1] "Mother to our Saviour Jesus Christ" is also the formula of the Homilies.

clause in the Creed, "born of the Virgin Mary," as to make it seem a matter of indifference whether or no the Virgin-birth were true. In the writings of Bishop Jewell (†1571), whose Apology ("Apologia Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ") is "the most complete expression of the distinctive position of the English Church," these are among the comments: —

> "The nearness of mother's blood should have profited Christ's mother nothing at all, unless she had more blessedly carried Christ in her heart than in her body." ("Works," ii, 757.)
>
> "Verily, Mr. Harding, to be the child of God is a great deal greater grace than to be the Mother of God."
>
> "Mary was more blessed or fuller of grace, in that she received the faith of Christ, than in that she conceived the flesh of Christ." (iii, 578.)

Bishop Latimer, the hero of the English Reformation, came near getting into trouble, in the reign of Henry VIII, before the Reformation had begun, by his plain speech about the Virgin Mary, — her perpetual virginity, and also the virginity *in partu*, which he condemned as

amounting to a rejection of the humanity of Christ. Since the days of Augustine, who from a sense of delicacy and courtesy had been willing to admit that Mary was sinless, this concession had hardened into a dogma, which it was perilous to deny. Bishop Latimer was still in bondage to the unreformed faith, but his mind had begun to move, and this was one of the starting points of his departure. His enemies were vindictive and fierce. He qualified his language somewhat, but was able to make an issue, that, whether or no Mary ever sinned, like all others she was *saved*, and needed to be *saved* by Christ.

> "And to that [question] 'What need you to speak of this?' I answered, 'Great need: when men cannot be content that she was a creature saved, but as it were a Saviouress, not needing salvation, it is necessary to set her in her degree to the glory of Christ, Creator and Saviour of all that be or shall be saved. Good authors have written that she was not a sinner but good authors never wrote that she was not saved. . . . There was difference betwixt her and Christ: and I will give as little to her as I can, rather than Christ her Son and Saviour shall

lack any parcel of his glory.'" ("Remains," p. 227.) [1]

There was little inclination among the reformers to magnify virginity as a virtue. Monasteries had been suppressed throughout the kingdom, and monks and nuns had been turned adrift. The state was consolidating itself on the basis of the family, as the sacred ultimate foundation of national prosperity. On this point the Reformers spoke, somewhat in the vein of the early fathers before monasticism arose. Among them was Becon, an influential writer, chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer, and a canon of Canterbury. He escaped the martyrdom reserved for Ridley, Latimer, Cranmer, and others, but he suffered much for his adherence to the Reformation, and in the language of the time was "a man mightily tossed about." In his treatise on "The Demands of Holy Scripture," is given this question and answer: —

"What is a Virgin? In Scripture it signifies any honest, faithful woman; or the spouse of Christ. Which spouse is either

[1] Latimer may have been overawed by the fierceness of his opponents. What he really thought and would have said, but refrained from saying, was accomplished in Article XV, entitled *Of Christ alone without sin.*

any soul believing in Christ, and living honestly according to His word; or else the whole congregation and Church of the faithful." [1]

In their comment on the clause "Born of the Virgin Mary," the Reformers were to a certain extent influenced by the necessity of opposition to the mystic utterances of Anabaptists, as Luther had also been roused by the teaching of the Zwickau prophets. It was the opinion of Joan of Kent, or Joan Bocher, that "our blessed Saviour did not take His body from the Virgin Mary, but passed through her as light through glass." The burning of this unfortunate woman for heresy (1550) is a blot upon the Reformation, to be compared with the burning of Servetus by Calvin, or the treatment accorded to Anne Hutchinson by the New England Puritans. She was a woman of an ultra-spiritual temperament, somewhat like the Quakers in her tendency to emphasize spirit in opposition to letter. When she was questioned by the Reformers, many of whom visited her in prison, in order to move her from the error of her ways, she answered, "I deny not that Christ is Mary's seed, or the

[1] "British Reformers," Becon, p. 423, London, Religious Tract Society.

woman's seed; but Mary had two seeds, one seed of her faith and another seed of her flesh and in her body. There is a natural and corporal seed and there is a spiritual and an heavenly seed, as we may gather of St. John, where he saith, 'The seed of God remaineth in him, and he cannot sin.' And Christ is her seed; but he is become man of the seed of her faith and belief; of spiritual, not of natural seed; for her seed and flesh was sinful, as the flesh and seed of others." [1]

That the Reformers were a little confused by this utterance is apparent, for it had a double tendency, and left them as it were in a strait betwixt two. But it had the effect of leading them to assert more strongly the actual birth of Christ from Mary, and it afforded another argument against the virginity *in partu* which was the popular belief. "How can we warrant Christ's humanity," writes Hutchinson, "if we make it uncertain whence he took it? . . . If he had any humanity or manhood, he had it undoubtedly of his mother." It is not necessary to cite the opinion expressed alike by the Reformers on this point. Latimer spoke for them, in resisting the opinion that the body of Christ was fantastical, but he associated with the

[1] Hutchinson, "Works," Parker Soc. ed., 146.

teaching of Joan, the current ecclesiastical tradition, as having a like fantastical tendency. Of the doctrine known as the *semper virginitas* he says: "They that will go about and say that she brought Him forth without pain, not after the manner of other women, they seem to do more hurt than good: for so we might come in doubt whether He had a very body or not."[1] The situation of the Reformers almost reproduces that of the moment when the Creed took its rise, when the Gnostics were maintaining that Christ was not actually born, but passed from heaven through the body of His mother in a supernatural way. Against this the Creed was originally a protest — He was "born of the Virgin Mary."

The sensitiveness now felt about the Virgin-birth has its roots in a divergence regarding the Incarnation. In the Anglican Church there has been developed, since the Reformation, a doctrine of the Incarnation which, while it accepts the Virgin-birth and recognizes the miraculous element in the entrance of Christ into the world, as well as in His departure from it, yet does not regard it as an essential condition for the incarnation of God in Christ or dogmatically determine that God could have

[1] "Works," ii, 115.

become incarnate in no other way. It places the stress not upon the Gospel of the Infancy, but upon the character and teaching of the mature Christ, upon His life and passion. For this view of the Incarnation, the Reformers prepared the way, by removing the obstacles which stood as a hinderance to its assertion and had so stood for ages. They laid the foundation for a more spiritual and effective conviction of the truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, but for the fuller presentation of the truth they had neither leisure nor opportunity. The generations that followed were preoccupied with other issues,—the conflict with Puritanism in the seventeenth century, the Deistic movement in the eighteenth. Not until the last century did there come the full moment when this central doctrine of the Christian faith could be adequately presented, as in the writings of Maurice, Hutton, Kingsley, Robertson, and the American Bushnell; and to this list may be added the name of Phillips Brooks, who was at the height of his power when elucidating the life and teaching and character of Christ. Never before has the meaning of the Incarnation been so powerfully illumined or with such triumphant success.

But contemporaneously with this movement

in religious thought, which made the Incarnation the central truth of the Christian faith, and called attention to the life of Christ portrayed in the Gospels, as the evidence of His divine Sonship, there came also a revival of the pre-reformation doctrine of the Incarnation, which not only made the Virgin-birth so essential that the Incarnation could not be conceived or held without it, but sought to restore the terminology associated with the worship of the Virgin, which the Church of England has rejected. The issues and fortunes of theology are therefore involved at this point in the Creed, — "Born of the Virgin Mary." The insistence on the mediæval view of the Incarnation, which, as has been shown, goes back in its origin to the fifth century, tends to beget a reactionary mood which leads to the denial of the Virgin-birth altogether. At this point the theological motive which springs from repugnance to the restoration of the pre-reformation theology may combine with another motive, derived from modern science, — the assertion of the uniformity of law and the impossibility of the miracle. The increased attention given to the study of the New Testament has also disclosed hitherto unsuspected difficulties connected with the Virgin-birth, which of

themselves would have begotten doubt, had there been no other cause.

The modern sensitiveness on the subject of the Virgin-birth goes back to Coleridge († 1834), the most influential personage, for English thought, whether in literature, philosophy, or theology, that the nineteenth century produced. Neither Bushnell, nor Maurice, nor Robertson could have done their work without him; all acknowledged their indebtedness to him. Coleridge had turned his attention in his theological reading to the writers of the English Church in the seventeenth century, as having greater force and attraction than those of later generations, of whom the world was then getting tired. He went back therefore as a preparation for a forward step. He studied writers, like Hooker, Field, Donne, Jeremy Taylor, Richard Baxter, Leighton, Bull, and many others, especially those who had contributed anything to the doctrine of the Trinity or the Incarnation. He fastened on the doctrine of the Trinity as the primary, fundamental, and all-inclusive doctrine of the Christian Church. He embraced with enthusiasm the church doctrine as set forth at the Council of Nicæa. He was not only familiar with the nomenclature, but he rather gloried in its exact use to express the fact of the

Incarnation — how the Logos, the Eternal Son, the second person in the Godhead, came down and was made man, how the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

But as Coleridge studied these writers of the seventeenth century, who in their aversion to Puritanism had resorted to the teachers of the ancient church for relief, he was led to animadvert upon many of their opinions as incompatible with Scripture, with reason, or with the dictates of true religion. Dr. Donne, the dean of St. Paul's, and a friend of George Herbert, himself also a poet and a man of fanciful, imaginative turn of mind, who revelled in quaint conceits, was pressing a view of the Incarnation and its connection with the Virgin-birth, against which Coleridge made his protest: —

> "The fear of giving offence, especially to good men of whose faith in all essential points we are partakers, may reasonably induce us to be slow and cautious in making up our minds finally on a religious question, and may, and ought to, influence us to submit our conviction to repeated revisals and rehearings. But there may arrive a time of such perfect clearness of view respecting the particular point, as to supersede all

fear of man by the higher duty of declaring the whole truth in Jesus. Therefore, having now passed six-sevenths of the ordinary period allotted to human life — resting my whole and sole hope of salvation and immortality on the divinity of Christ, and the redemption by His cross and passion, and holding the doctrine of the Triune God as the very ground and foundation of the Gospel faith — I feel myself enforced by conscience to declare and avow, that, in my deliberate judgment, the 'Christopædia' prefixed to the third Gospel, and incorporated with the first, but according to my belief the latest of the four, was unknown to, or not recognized by, the Apostles Paul and John; and that instead of supporting the doctrine of the Trinity and the Filial Godhead of the Incarnate Word, as set forth by John i. 1, and by Paul, it, if not altogether irreconcilable with this faith, doth yet greatly weaken and bedim its evidence; and that by the too palpable contradictions between the narrative in the first Gospel and that in the third, it has been a fruitful magazine of doubts respecting the historic character of the Gospels themselves. I have read most of the criticisms on this

text, and my impression is, that no learned Jew can be expected to receive the common interpretation as the true primary sense of the words. The severely literal Aquila renders the Hebrew word *νεᾶνις* a young woman, girl, maiden. But were it asked of me: Do you then believe our Lord to have been the son of Mary by Joseph? I reply: It is a point of religion with me to have no belief one way or the other. I am in this way like St. Paul, more than content not to know Christ Himself *κατά σάρκα*. It is enough for me to know that the Son of God *became flesh*, *σαρξ εγένετο γενόμενος ἐκ γυναικὸς*, and more than that, it appears to me, was unknown to the Apostles, or, if known, not taught by them as appertaining to a saving faith in Christ. — October, 1831." [1]

[1] "Works," Shedd's ed., v. 79. Commenting on one of Donne's sermons, where he is dealing with the Virginity *in partu*, which is the authorized interpretation by the Greek and Roman churches of the clause, "Born of the Virgin Mary," Coleridge remarked: "I think I might safely put the question to any serious, spiritual-minded Christian: what one inference tending to edification, in the discipline of will, mind, or affections, he can draw from the speculations of the last two or three pages of this sermon, respecting Mary's pregnancy and parturition? *Can* — I write it emphatically — *can* such points appertain to our faith as Christians, which every parent would decline speaking of before a family, and which, if the questions were propounded by

Dr. Donne thought it was the wish of Christ that the Virgin-birth should not be taught or mentioned.

"Very ingenious," says Coleridge, "but likewise very presumptuous, this arbitrary attribution of St. Paul's silence and presumable ignorance of the virginity of Mary, to Christ's own determination to have the fact passed over." The further expression of Coleridge's thought is given in the following citations from his writings:

"O, what a tangle of impure whimsies has this notion of an immaculate conception, an Ebionite tradition, as I think, brought into the Christian Church. I have sometimes suspected that the Apostle John had a particular view to this point in the first half of the first chapter of his Gospel . . . and met it by the true solution, the Eternal Filiation of the Word." (p. 276.)

"*Non nude hominem* — not a mere man do I hold Jesus to have been and to be; but a perfect man, and by personal union with the Logos, perfect God. That His having

another in the presence of my daughter, aye, or even of my, no less in mind and imagination, innocent wife, I should resent as as an indecency?" (p. 80.)

an earthly father might be requisite to His being a perfect man, I can readily suppose; but why the having an earthly father should be more incompatible with His perfect divinity, than His having an earthly mother, I cannot comprehend. All that John and Paul believed, God forbid that I should not." (P. 436.)

"It may deserve attention from the zealous advocates of the authenticity of the Evangelium Infantiæ, prefixed to the Gospel of Luke and concorporated with the canonical revision of Matthew's — whether the immaculate conception of the Virgin is not a legitimate corollary of the miraculous conception of our Lord, so far at least that the same reason, that rendered it impossible for Him to have an immaculate father, is equally cogent for the necessity of an immaculate mother.

"But alas! in subjects of this sort, we can only stave off the difficulty. It is a point in a circle, on whichever side we remove from it, we are sure to come round to it again. So here, either the Virgin's ancestors, paternal and maternal, from Adam and Eve downward, were all sinless; or her immediate father and mother were not so, but like the

rest of mankind involved in original sin. But if a sin-stained father and mother could produce an immaculate offspring in one instance, why not in the other? That the union of the Divine Word with the seed and nature of man should preclude the contagion of sin in the Holy Child, is as much to be expected on the one supposition of our Lord's birth as on the other. So far from being a greater miracle, it seems so necessarily involved in the miracle of the Incarnation, common to both, as scarcely to be worthy of being called an additional miracle. The accidental circumstance, that the Unitarian party, most palpably to their own disadvantage, reject or question the chapter in question, is the chief cause of the horror with which our orthodox divines recoil from every free investigation of the point." (P. 532.)

It was one of the ecclesiastical events in the last century, which amazed all thoughtful men, when the Roman Church, under the lead of Pope Pius IX, proclaimed the new dogma of the immaculate conception of Mary. It was to be sure the necessary and logical sequence of the belief that the birth from a virgin was essential to the Incarnation; that the Incarnation could

not have been otherwise in the nature of the case. God and Mary, so ran the argument, were the parents of Jesus, the one furnishing the divinity, the other the humanity. But since the humanity of Jesus was exceptional and divine, and the flesh of His body sacred and life-giving, Mary must herself have been an exceptional being, a *quasi* divine person, sinless, and in order to sinlessness immaculately conceived. But to glorify Mary was also an end in the mind of Pius IX. In the famous painting in the Vatican, executed at the order of the Pope to commemorate the new dogma, Mary has taken her place in the sacred Trinity, along with the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son, as having an equal share with Deity, in bringing to the world the blessing of the Incarnation.

The nineteenth century was, by common consent, the most enlightened, the most progressive, in the world's history. No other century could compare with it for great discoveries, for powerful illumination in every department of life, in science, in literature, in art, in philosophy. How, then, could so retrogressive a step have been taken, which outdid the dreams in the Middle Ages? Among those who wondered was the late Frederick Robertson, who was preaching in the fifties, and for whom the new dogma fur-

nished the subject of two of his most notable sermons, "The Glory of the Virgin Mother" and "The Glory of the Divine Son."

> "How comes it to pass," he asks, "after three hundred years of Reformation, we find Virgin-worship restoring itself again in this reformed England, where, least of all countries, we should expect it, and where the remembrance of Romish persecution might have seemed to make its return impossible? . . . It is *the* doctrine to which the converts to Romanism cling most tenaciously."

Robertson had felt the force of that severe reaction through which the last century passed, when humanity, as it were, rose up in its might to dethrone the deity. But he escaped its evil effects, and his answer to the question is true. Mary worship is "idolatry, in modern Romanism, a pernicious and most defiling one," where the worship of the mother overshadows the worship of the Son, and the love given to her is so much taken from Him. The remedy for it is to get back to the full humanity of Jesus. Because the humanity of Christ had been lost sight of or obscured, through inferences from a wrong conception of the Incarnation, the world had

turned to Mary as a substitute. "The true glory of the Virgin was the glory of true womanhood, . . . not immaculate origin, nor immaculate life, nor exaltation to divine honors . . . the glory of motherhood; . . . not the Queen of Heaven, but something nobler still, a creature content to be what God had made her." ("Sermons," ii, 277 ff., first Am. ed.)

Robertson's prophetic call to return to the humanity of Christ, as the way to overcome false worship, has been fulfilled, but in larger and different measure than he anticipated. The ecclesiastical reaction, which was moving Romeward, was checked by the rise of Biblical and historical criticism, — by the "higher criticism" of the New Testament in particular, which has brought back to the world the historical Christ, till at last we are beginning to know what manner of man He was. Through the contemplation of His personality, He now begins to stand revealed to the modern world, as never before, in all the history of the Church, was He seen or known. No greater boon was ever given to the world than this. But as we study the records of His life, the mystery of His person also grows. Into the depths of His consciousness, no one can ever hope fully to penetrate. But at least Christ realizes to faith all that the religious imagination

could ask for, if "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19). We can understand how St. Paul, from his knowledge of Christ after the flesh, should have been led to say, "*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*"

CHAPTER VII

MODERN SENSITIVENESS ABOUT THE VIRGIN-BIRTH

It is to have been devoutly wished that the present controversy about the Virgin-birth had not arisen to disturb the peace of the Church. Many of those who feel keenly the modern difficulties would have preferred to allow objections to slumber, in the conviction that no serious issue was involved. There will always be a large number brought up from infancy within the Church, who will continue to think and to talk in the old way, however the critical questions regarding the fact may be determined. There are many subjects in the field of religion or theology where the mind, the intellectual faculties, remain willingly in suspense, and in such an attitude may lie prudence and the highest wisdom, even the possibility of the larger growth. There is much to be said in behalf of the Virgin-birth which should moderate or conciliate those who oppose it. The first man, who was of the earth earthy, came into the

world, according to the faith of ancient peoples, in some supernatural way by a special divine creative act. The conception of man's descent after the modern evolutionary hypothesis will never quite destroy the beautiful vision, as it has been represented in art by Michael Angelo, of the first man in his first act after the creation, touching with his hand the hand of God. Poetry and art are intimately associated with religion. The primary religious question is, not whether a certain doctrine is true, for we may have no canons of determining truth; but, what does it mean, — a question we can always answer. If the appearance of the first man is more truly represented to the religious imagination, as proceeding forth from the Divine will, after special deliberation in the councils of heaven, much more must the second man, who is the Lord from heaven, have entered upon the scene of His task on earth in some still more special and supernatural way. Such is, and is likely to remain, the working of the religious instinct as it seeks to reproduce the actual fact, to cover with a delicate veil the material process, to see only the spiritual, that which transcends the earthly and transfigures it. It is the very nature of religion that it tends to cultivate good taste, as well as a right heart and right living. The dig-

nity of the situation demands dignity in the recognition. "It was becoming" is a response that can justify belief. We can understand how, without controversy, Augustine should in summary fashion announce that the question was closed, in regard to the mother of our Lord. Out of respect to Christ, as he said, let there be no admission in her case of actual sin. Even Martin Luther, who had the clearest anticipation of the modern view of the Incarnation after ages which had groaned in ignorance of the full truth, even Luther could not escape from the environment of the religious imagination, where poetry and art, and refined religious sensibility, played about the person of Mary.[1] The following exalted passage breathes the incense of the religious spirit: —

> "Behold thus did Christ take to Himself from us our birth and insert it unto His birth, and give in His own, in order that by it, we may become pure and new, as though it were our own. Every Christian, therefore, may exult and boast in the birth of Christ,

[1] Cf. a very interesting passage in Dorner, "Person of Christ," Div. ii, vol. ii, p. 91 (Eng. tr.), where the thought of Luther about Mary is given. But he also maintained, says Dorner, that Christ took upon Him our fallen nature. "The roots of the idea of a purification of Mary from original sin were thus cut away," etc.

just as though he himself had been physically born of Mary like Christ. Whoso doth not believe or doubteth this, is no Christian. This is the sense of Isaiah ix. 6: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Us, us, to us it is born, to us it is given. Therefore see thou that thy delight in the Gospels is derived not solely from the history itself; for it exists not long: but make thou His birth thine own; exchange with Christ, so that thou mayest get quit of thy birth and appropriate His. This takes place when thou believest. Then wilt thou of a certainty lie in the womb of the Virgin Mary and be her dear child." [1]

It is a generalization from our knowledge of history that all its greater epochs and moments of revelation are represented as ushered in by the miracle, or by an opening of the heavens which gives us a glimpse of a higher, more blessed world than that we see. At the creation the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted aloud for joy. When prophecy was born, there came first as its heralds the prophets who were greater in deed than in word: Elijah and Elisha, who moved in an atmosphere of the miraculous,

[1] Dorner, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

a most unusual feature of Jewish history. Before the inspired Word came the supernatural act, and the way was prepared for the prophets with whom God talked. That the Virgin-birth should form one of the prologues of the Gospel of Christ was inevitable, and its grandeur is unsurpassed, not equalled, by the glories of the first creation. The song of the angels, the heavenly message of good-will to men, go with the account of the Annunciation and they constitute an adequate setting of the event which redeems the world. Once more it was to happen that an event would take place calling for a voice from heaven, as when peace came to the persecuted Church and the triumph over the old world of force and sense; when Constantine, it may have been on Monte Mario, overlooking the Eternal City on the eve of the decisive battle of the Milvian Bridge, heard the words in a vision, "By this sign conquer."

The world will cherish these things, scholars and critics no less than the purely religious mind, if only they be not turned into the form of dogma to be accepted on the authority of the Christian Church, as an infallible guide to religious truth. It is this tendency to dogmatize about the Virgin-birth, and to make it essential to the Incarnation, or as if a belief

necessary to salvation, which in turn begets a reaction, tempting men to become "martyrs of disgust," to deny and reject as untrue the external incident, whose misinterpretation it is and not the incident itself, which is out of harmony with Scripture and with the revelation of modern life.

It is a relief, then, and it brings freedom, to turn to Scripture as authority, and not to the tradition of the Church as an infallible guide, in matters of faith. For nowhere have we been taught in Scripture or in our formularies that the Christian Church is such a guide. On the contrary, it is declared in the Articles that the churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria have erred, and that the Church of Rome hath also erred, even in things pertaining to the faith. If they have erred, and in the happier ages of the Catholic Church, what guarantee have we that the Anglican Church may not err. Certainly the Church of England does not claim for herself an inerrancy which she refuses to the ancient churches of Christendom. Nowhere in her formularies does she show any solicitude for her own infallibility. Nor does she show solicitude for the creeds. Her sole solicitude is for the maintenance of the Word of God, uncorrupted

by men's traditions or made of no effect by the commandments of men. This over-concern about the creeds[1] indicates a weakening hold upon the doctrine as Christ hath commanded and as this Church hath received the same. This ultra-devotion to the creeds has now gone so far that those who draw their doctrine from Scripture, diligently studied and with such aids as help to the knowledge of the same, and who are inwardly persuaded of the truth they hold, are accused of betraying the faith, or charged with lacking any objective basis for their faith, and their belief is counted as a vain thing, because it rests on the shifting sands of subjectivity. There is confusion here and grave misunderstanding. It can only be overcome by taking the vows of the Ordinal as meaning what they say, as carrying the meaning which those who placed them in the Prayer Book intended them to convey. We

[1] The Catholic Church existed for four centuries, at its best and doing its greatest work, without any creed in its offices, liturgical or other. Peter the Fuller, patriarch of Antioch, was the first to introduce the Creed into the Liturgy, in the time of the Monophysite controversy about 470. The precedent was adopted by Constantinople about 510, and then by Spain 589; by the Gallican and Anglican churches about the eighth century, and by Rome so late as the eleventh. In the offices of the Breviary, the use of the Creed was ordered in the ninth century. The Creed was neither sung nor said during mass at Rome until the time of Benedict VIII (1012–1024). Cf. "Ordo Romanus Primus," ed. by Atchley, p. 80.

must revert again to that earlier position that Scripture is above the creeds, and that the creeds are to be interpreted by Scripture and not the Scripture by the creeds. The vow which the Church imposes on her clergy to be "diligent in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same," makes progress possible, while to put the creeds above Scripture, as the key to their interpretation, makes it impossible. The Church of England is in harmony with the spirit of those memorable words of Robinson, the Puritan minister, that God may yet have more light to break forth from His Holy Word. But we need not go outside of the Church for such reminders. Our own Bishop Butler in the Analogy has uttered the same conviction: —

> "And as it is owned the whole scheme of Scripture is not yet understood, so if it ever comes to be understood before the restitution of all things, and without miraculous interpositions, it must be in the same way as natural knowledge is come at: by the continuance and progress of learning and liberty, and by particular persons attending to, comparing, and pursuing intimations scattered up and down it, which are over-

looked and disregarded by the generality of the world. For this is the way in which all improvements are made, by thoughtful men's tracing on obscure hints, as it were, dropped us by nature accidentally, or which seem to come into our minds by chance. *Nor is it at all incredible that a book, which has been so long in the possession of mankind, should contain many truths as yet undiscovered.*" (Pt. ii, chap. iii.)

To this test the creeds must be constantly subjected, and through the process of this test they are passing to-day. Whether we approve or not, however great our regret or pain at seeing things which we cherish become subjects of doubt or controversy, the wiser course is to accept an inevitable situation, and wait for the conclusion equally inevitable. In the case of the Virgin-birth the candid student in search for the truth, will rightly dwell on its tendency to prevent the person of Christ from being regarded as an evolution from humanity by a natural process; or to represent the subordination of man to the transcendent will of Deity, the exaltation of God and not of man. These considerations constitute a presumption in favor of its truth, in addition to the weight of the

Gospel narratives. But there are also objections and difficulties which create doubt and uncertainty. It will not meet the case to say that these objections are frivolous, captious, not to be taken seriously, or that those who make them are insincere, or seeking to discredit Scripture. The Bible as the word of God contains all things necessary to salvation. But all that is written in Scripture is not in the fullest or truest sense Scripture. Else should the speech of Bildad the Shuhite be placed on the same footing as the utterances of great prophets. There are parts of Scripture which are like the fixed stars shining by their own light and centres of vast systems, while other parts are subordinate and inferior. The Virgin-birth is contained in Scripture, but the question before the devout scholar is whether it is such an essential integral part of the Scripture as to be intimately bound up with the things necessary to salvation. The incident of the Virgin-birth is given in two only of the four Gospels, and never alluded to again. Christ Himself does not refer to it. The three great apostles, Peter and John and Paul, are silent about it. The attitude of Mary as given in the evangelical narratives seems to many inconsistent with the knowledge or consciousness of such a wonderful circumstance as the Annuncia-

tion. And further a suspicion has arisen that in the New Testament itself there is another way of referring to the birth of Christ,[1] which has been overlooked under the influence of the conviction of the Virgin-birth; so that when it occurs it has been interpreted as a way of speaking, a concession, a suppression required by the occasion. It may be so, but this is a question not to be determined in any *a priori* way. There is nothing in the Virgin-birth incompatible with the teaching of St. John or of St. Paul; but the circumstance of their silence would at least seem to imply that it was not so essential, as that a belief in the Incarnation depended on it.[2]

[1] Cf. Luke iv. 22; John i. 45; vi. 42.

[2] In his valuable treatise on the "Incarnation," Dr. Briggs has remarked: "All that we have thus far learned of the incarnation from the teaching of Jesus and the writings of St. Paul, St. John, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, would stand firm if there had been no Virgin-birth; if Jesus had been born of Joseph and Mary, having father and mother, as any other child. Therefore the Virgin-birth is only one of many statements of the mode of the incarnation. It has no more documentary value, no more intrinsic importance, than any other of the many we have thus far studied. The doctrine of the incarnation does not depend upon the Virgin-birth. Since all the other passages relating to the incarnation, except that of the Gospel of the Infancy, know nothing of the Virgin-birth, it is only a minor matter connected with the incarnation, and should have a subordinate place in the doctrine. That which is unknown to the teachings of St. Peter and St. Paul, St. John and St. James, and our Lord Himself, and is absent from the earliest and latest Gospels cannot be so essential as many people have supposed" (p. 217).

It is said that if the greater writers of the New Testament are silent, as if they had not heard of the Virgin-birth, yet its universal acceptance within the Church at the beginning of the second century constitutes an argument for its character as essential truth which cannot be overcome. Here, too, qualification is necessary lest we be misled by uncritical statements. Ignatius († 117), it is true, had received the report, but exactly in what spirit is not quite so clear. He was an ecstatic soul, and numbered it with the mysteries of the passion and resurrection. But, on the other hand, he stands alone among the writings known as the Apostolic Fathers, in making reference to it. These writings may extend, as to their date, nearly to the middle of the second century, beginning with Clement of Rome, A.D. 96. Clement is silent regarding it, so are Barnabas and Polycarp, and Papias in the few fragments of his book, and silent also are the authors of the Shepherd of Hermas [1] and of the Epistle to Diognetus. Aristides, the Apologist, had heard of it (133), introducing it in his first allusion

[1] Cf. Taylor, "The Witness of Hermas to the Four Gospels," London, 1892, pp. 30–32, for the suggestion of a possible reference in "Sim." ix (3, 4), in the bright unhewn stones, which make the foundation of the tower (16, 7).

with "It is said," but undoubtedly accepting it. This does not look like an universal consensus, but who shall say how much or how little in this case means the argument from silence?

When we come to Justin Martyr († c. 165) or to Irenæus, who followed him in the second century († c. 190), two writers who fully accepted the fact of the Virgin-birth, we become aware, on a closer study of their writings, that the evidential value of the Virgin-birth, as a fulfilment of ancient prophecy, is a preponderating motive, if not the sole one, which recommends it to their reason. The Church was endeavoring to meet the charge of the heathens, that Christianity was a new religion, and that a new religion could not be true. To carry the religion of Christ back into the past, and to show that it had been anticipated and foretold centuries before Christ appeared, became therefore a motive with apologists and polemical writers. When the Virgin-birth was accepted it became the most striking evidence of the fulfilment of a prophecy announced some seven hundred years before (Is. vii. 14); and in comparison with such an antiquity, the prevailing religions in the empire could not compete. The claim was carried further back by means of the Virgin-birth to the creation itself, when Eve became the counter-

part of Mary. It is not here the Virgin-birth, in its miraculous aspect alone, or in any necessary relation to the Incarnation, but as an event taking off the rawness of novelty, answering the question, why Christianity had not appeared earlier on the scene, if it were a Divine revelation. This argument, which told most effectively in the second century, has now lost its force and been abandoned.[1]

It is necessary that we should give up the assumption that because a certain writer at a certain time refers to the Virgin-birth, therefore other writers accept it and in the same sense, or make the same use of it. If we find that Aristides mentions it, yet, on the other hand, Athenagoras does not (c. 177), and his Apology for power and elegance is unsurpassed. Arnobius makes no reference to it (c. 300), but his contemporary Lactantius does. The Apology

[1] See *ante*, p. 124. There was another line of evidence for the Virgin-birth and for the virginity *in partu* to which only a reference is here made. The reader who would know the sort of proof on which the early Church relied at the time when this doctrine was working its way to the popular acceptance may seek it for himself, in the "Protevangelium Jacobi" (19, 20), a book of great antiquity, widely circulated, whose gratuitous information, eminent Church fathers did not disdain to employ. In another work based on the so-called "Protevangelium," known as the "Evangelium Pseudo-Matthæi," the same proof is incorporated. Cf. Coleridge's remark, in note to p. 186.

of Minucius Felix is silent. Clement of Alexandria does not cite the passages referring to it in Matthew and Luke. One reference to Christ as born of a Virgin is found in the Stromata (vi, 15), but considering his views on virginity, it may be of doubtful value. Clement makes no use of the fact. Origen comments on the Gospel of the Infancy, but he builds up his doctrine of the Incarnation without reference to it.

When we pass into the fourth century, it is a circumstance of significance, calling for explanation, that in the creeds of the churches of Jerusalem and Cæsarea, the Virgin-birth is not mentioned, and its absence from the Creed of Nicæa is still more striking. It is these cumulative considerations, which, while they do not justify the denial of the Virgin-birth, yet do confirm the conviction that it is not so essential to the Incarnation as has been maintained; that in the Eastern Church at least, however it may have been in the Western, the belief in the Incarnation has not so universally associated with the Virgin-birth, as to be dependent upon it.

The Church is also confronted to-day with the possibility that what has happened in the case of the opening chapters in the Book of Genesis may happen in the case of the Gospel of the Infancy as given by Matthew and Luke, — a

great falling away from the literal acceptance once accorded them. Under these circumstances, and with no additional evidence in confirmation of the narrative, it is not wise to attempt to bulwark the Virgin-birth by doubtful scientific analogies, or seek to show that the exceptional personality of Christ can only be explained by His exceptional birth. We have already gone too far in our dependence on the natural sciences. It is better to keep strictly to the religious sphere. Laws of heredity, laws of descent, character as resulting from inherited structure, considerations based on evolution, are out of place in religion. "Ce n'est pas la science qui nous manque, à nous modernes; nous l'avons surabondamment. . . . Mais ce que nous avons absorbé, nous absorbe. Ce qui nous manque c'est la poésie de la vie." And indeed, the Virgin-birth, rightly interpreted, is a protest against the view that Christ comes forth from humanity by any process of evolution or heredity. Coleridge[1] long ago disposed of this position, and his statement may be regarded as final, — that the sinlessness of Jesus is as difficult to account for with a human mother alone as with the ordinary parentage. Spencerism in theology leads inevitably to the novel

[1] See *ante*.

dogma of Rome (1854), that Mary herself was sinless because immaculately conceived. That pushes the difficulty back by a generation, where it is not quite so apparent, but it is there. A similar attempt to strengthen a dogma by an appeal to science was the acceptance of the principle of "natural selection" as the analogue of predestination in the Calvinistic theology. The Divine decree of election, it was said, meant that God would save all who were worth saving. The trouble with these and other apologetics for ancient dogmas is that they are rationalistic, treading where Scripture has not ventured, not only going beyond the Word of God, but by implication weakening the Scripture teaching regarding the Holy Spirit's agency, as though the Holy Spirit were not adequate to the task of guaranteeing the sinlessness of Jesus. "And the child grew, and waxed strong in Spirit; and the grace of God was upon Him." The grace of God, the "sufficient grace," is none other than the Holy Spirit, whose function it is in the economy of the eternal and ever blessed Trinity to unite together the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son in the bond of the infinite love; whose function on earth is to bring all mankind into the same unity of the Divine love and into loving obedience to the Divine will. Surely,

then, the Holy Spirit, who ever waits upon the Father and the Son, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, is adequate to explain the sinlessness of Jesus, without resort to some theory of natural law in the spiritual world.

A mistake has been made at this point, and we need to retrace our steps. There may be imitations, dim prophecies of spiritual law in the natural world, which may serve as confirmations of our faith; but to reverse the process and to project the natural into the spiritual order is to lead only to disaster. The experience of the ancient Catholic Church, as already given, is here a warning and not a precedent to be followed. And it is the reversion to that Catholic Church of the fifth century which in great measure explains the present embarrassment and sensitiveness about the Virgin-birth.

And this process, naturalistic rather than spiritual, has been accompanied by another motive, engendered in the great romantic movement which swept like a whirlwind over the last century. Romanticism in literature and art, or in the Church, is a term too large to be here defined, but of some of its fruits in the ecclesiastical sphere it may be said that they constitute a departure from the doctrine of Christ, as this Church hath received it. The Virgin-birth began

to rise into a prominence unknown since the Reformation, in consequence of the proclamation by Pope Pius IX (1854) of the dogma that Mary herself was immaculately conceived. To this motive must be added another — the influence of Italian art, which to many has become almost their only religion, where the mediæval worship of Mary has been presented as the central fact of the Christian faith. The appeal made by this feature of ecclesiastical art to the host of travellers and pilgrims who now visit Italy as a sacred land is responsible to some degree for giving an undue and exaggerated, even a morbid, prominence to the Virgin-birth, so that now when the clause is recited in the Creed, it is with difficulty we escape from it to the true and original purport of its insertion.

It may serve to show how far we have travelled from the consciousness of our Protestant forefathers, and from the spirit of our formularies, if we turn to some of the commentaries on the Creed, which once enjoyed great vogue, and are now become unfamiliar. Among them is Nowell's "Catechism," very influential in the sixteenth century and after. There it reads: —

"*Question.* But why is there in this confession, the Apostles' Creed, mention made by name of the Virgin Mary?

"*Answer.* That He, Christ, may be known to be that true seed of Abraham and David, of whom it was from God foretold and foreshadowed by the prophecies of the prophets." (Parker Soc. ed., p. 135.)

In Archbishop Secker's "Lectures on the Catechism," [1] of which an American edition was published in 1835, it reads: —

"The reason for inserting it [the name Mary] in the Creed most probably was because it is set down in Scripture, and that by naming the particular person of whom our Saviour sprung, He might appear to be of that family from which it was foretold He should arise, being born of this Virgin of the house of David." (P. 67.)

The Virgin-birth is not in the foreground of the consciousness of either writer; but both writers are in accord with the interpretation of the clause by Ignatius, who also insisted on

[1] Archbishop Secker was born 1693 and died 1768. He was consecrated bishop of Bristol 1735; transferred to Oxford 1737, to which see was added the deanery of St. Paul's 1750; and enthroned Archbishop of Canterbury 1758.

Christ's descent from the house of David as an essential thing,[1] that Christ was Messiah fulfilling the expectation of the ages. Hence the importance of the genealogies in the prologues of Matthew and Luke, and not merely the incidents of the Virgin-birth.[2]

The difficulties waiting upon the creeds and their interpretation are not likely to diminish, rather will they increase, for the question at issue is the freedom of the clergy and laity.[3] Is

[1] See *ante*, p. 108.

[2] It is now generally admitted that the genealogies trace the descent of Joseph and not of Mary.

[3] "The Church of England is based upon the Bible. The Reformation was essentially the creation of a new court of appeal, the shifting of the sanction for belief from the authority of the Church to the written word. The Church everywhere appeals to the written word; nothing which is not contained therein or justifiable therefrom can be imposed upon a Christian man whether lay or cleric. The minister is to be a student of the Word. 'Will you be diligent in . . . reading of the Holy Scriptures and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same?'"

Mark the word "studies": he is not to accept the documents as formal decrees with fixed traditional meaning, but as a literature of which he is progressively to learn the meaning. Now, if such be the position, it appears impossible to dispute the fact that, as study reveals a new content for the words, new meaning, new connotation in the Scriptures, there must be liberty of interpretation of the formularies. If the formularies be the index, the summary, the table of contents of the Scriptures, and if study, imposed as a sacred duty, reveal new meaning of the Scriptures, that new meaning must inevitably be admitted in ascertaining and determining the meaning of the formularies. Rev. W. Manning, M.A., in *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1906, p. 413.

the Church of Christ free to examine and inquire and to make use of such studies as help to the knowledge of the Scriptures; or are these things determined in advance by the authority of tradition as given in the creeds? This Church inherits the spirit of freedom from the Anglican Church, and the Prayer Book is a powerful incentive to its exercise, and was intended so to be. Not until the Prayer Book is abandoned as a mistake and failure can the spirit of freedom be exorcised. The rehabilitation of Constitution and Canons, the insistence that the Church is organized as a business corporation, and makes a contract with the clergy, by which they renounce the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free in return for their daily bread, — all this line of procedure will be of no avail. We have got into the existing difficulty by abandoning the teaching of the Prayer Book, by seeking to make the Church infallible, by substituting tradition for God's Word, and putting a burden on the creeds which they are not able to carry.

The relief from the evils of the situation may be sought in two ways. (1) We may return to the original interpretation of the clause, "born of the Virgin Mary," impressing upon our minds, as we recite it, how it means that the Son of God

was actually born into this world of a human mother. St. Paul has given the equivalent expression, "Born of a woman, born under the law." We must keep constantly before us the interpretation of the Creed, as given in the Church Catechism, for it is one of the most valuable guarantees of spiritual liberty we possess. Whatever the Creed may contain in the way of subordinate statement, what we chiefly learn from it is the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood as based on the creation, the doctrine of the Divine Sonship as including the redemption of all mankind in Christ, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as sanctifying the people of God, in order to bring them into the fellowship of the Father and the Son. This is what we are also chiefly to teach; and this is what the Creed means, not only in the daily office, but also at baptism, and in the visitation of the sick, or at the burial of the dead.

And (2) there is a provision made in the rubric of the English book before all the creeds, — Apostles', Nicene, or Athanasian, — that they be "sung or said." In the American book the word "sung" has been omitted, but we may think no special significance attaches to the omission. It was the opinion of Dr. Arnold of Rugby that the creeds should always be

sung. There has never been any authoritative decision as to the significance of their liturgical use, nor is there to-day any common understanding. If they are sung they pass into the rank of the great hymns, the *Te Deum* and the *Gloria in Excelsis*, where misunderstandings disappear. Recited in their original sense, in every clause, they can no longer be. They have been put to the test of Scripture, as Article viii requires, and the clauses, "He descended into hell" and the "resurrection of the flesh," have not stood the test. But as hymns expressing the faith of the Church of the early centuries, they will retain their dignity and importance, — a revelation of the human soul responding to the Divine call; which if they become the subject of controversy and business contract they must lose. So long as we have the Word of God containing all things necessary to salvation, the creeds are not indispensable. They might be omitted from the offices of the Church and the Christian faith not be impaired. But as summaries of the convictions of the Christian heart in past ages, as ties binding us to the one common Christian life and experience in every age, they are invaluable, the most precious heritage of our historical faith, although not its complete expression.

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